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**Women's Sexual Agency and Use of Traditional Aphrodisiacs in
Ilorin, North Central Nigeria**

by

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at the

University of Johannesburg

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the infallible, generous, and omniscient God. Also, to my mother, Mrs Mary Shola Alabi, who perfectly describes a virtuous woman; her perseverance and tenacity at the phase of very limiting social, economic, and political circumstances are testament to what a firm belief in God, commitment, and hard work can achieve. Thank you for your love and sacrifices, not just for your children and immediate family, but the entire community.



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ABSTRACT

The desire to enhance sexual pleasure and satisfaction, ensure fidelity in relationships and treat sexual dysfunctions are some of the common factors attributed to the use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Nigeria. However, its connection to women's sexual agency and empowerment in intimate relationships has become a very popular and fundamental issue debated within the sociology of intimate relationships. Against this background, this study investigated women's sexual agency and the use of traditional aphrodisiacs (*kayan mata*) in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative design to understand why women use traditional aphrodisiacs, to identify the most popularly used aphrodisiacs, to understand how women's use of these traditional aphrodisiacs influences their sexual agency and familial relationships, and to gain a deeper insight into men's perceptions of women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs. Drawing from the arguments of selected African feminists on sexuality and family/relationship dynamics, this study advances arguments that African women across history and cultures use various strategies and initiatives for circumventing and negotiating subjugating patriarchal strictures of gender and thus gain a position of significance within familial and intimate terrains. In this research, the theoretical arguments of the social exchange theory provide a framework to examine the nature of sex as transactional in the use of traditional aphrodisiacs and how it is negotiated within intimate relationships.

The findings revealed that these traditional aphrodisiacs were viewed as enhancing sexual pleasure and confidence, ensuring partner fidelity, and increasing bonding and commitment in a relationship. Furthermore, through the stimulation of love and the enhancement of sexual pleasure, the use of these *kayan mata* products were deemed to strengthen sexual and overall relationship satisfaction. However, the participants also argued that the use of *kayan mata* in extramarital relationships holds consequences for marriages and, as such, female users of these aphrodisiacs can be labelled as 'dangerous women' capable of asserting themselves and abusing men. Notwithstanding, this study reveals that *kayan mata* is an important tool for negotiating power/influence within household politics that has helped women to claim agency over their sexual life, enhanced their participation in household decisions, and challenged oppressive structures that inhibit women. This study therefore brings to the fore the socio-economic narratives in the use of *kayan mata*, its role within the politics and dynamics of intimate relationships, the nuanced nature of women's empowerment and sexual agency, as well as the complex nature of sexual consent in the use of aphrodisiacs.

Keywords: traditional aphrodisiacs, sexuality, sexual agency, intimate relationship, marriage



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IEMSS	Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
WAF	West African Feminists/Feminism



CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Women's Use of Traditional Aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

As societies transform and gender roles and cultural norms shift, the factors that influence the quality and dynamics of sexual relations also change. The nature of intimate unions and social expectations that accompany sexual relations might also undergo processes of change. In Nigeria, part of this change could be illustrated through acknowledgement of the increasing use of traditional aphrodisiacs as sexual stimulants in intimate relationships (Abdullahi and Tukur 2013; Alkali, Ismaila and Muhindo 2015). Rättsch and Müller-Ebeling (2013) defined traditional aphrodisiacs as substances made from roots, plants, and animal parts that perform several sexual functions. These functions include impotence treatment, enhancing sexual virility, and generally increasing sexual pleasure (Chauhan et al. 2014). In addition, several fruits and food items have also been identified as natural aphrodisiacs that perform roles that are important for sustaining sexual health.

Moving beyond Nigeria, traditional aphrodisiacs that act as sexual stimulants have been reported to be widely used among men and women in Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, and Southern Africa (Govindasamy et al. 2007; Agea et al. 2008). Clinical researchers highlight that these traditional aphrodisiacs made from roots and herbs not only stimulate sexual intercourse but also contain anabolic and hormone-stimulating properties that are fundamental for infertility treatment (Muanya and Odukoya 2008). Abdullahi and Tukur (2013) noted that venereal stimulation is an age-old practice that is still very relevant in contemporary societies. The use of various substances to increase the pleasure of sexual experiences is prevalent among most cultures across the globe. Coupled with this is the increased reporting of sexual dysfunction among people in intimate relationships in Nigeria (Bello and Isah 2015). It is important to note that sexual dysfunction in this context is conceptualised to be complex because these experiences are highly subjective. In that regard, Idung et al. (2012) argued that dysfunctionalities relating to sex are quite difficult to research given that several stigmas are associated with persons who are believed to have problems of a sexual nature. Furthermore, what is deemed dysfunctional is not just a biological but also a social construction that could vary across contexts. Implicatively, people become very secretive about their sexual

experiences, especially when they feel it does not meet the standard of what they consider normal.

While some of these stigmas and stereotypes might impact the number of people seeking help, quite a significant number of people seek clinical assistance and utilise the services of traditional aphrodisiac sellers (Oyekanmi et al. 2012). For instance, Mosaku and Ukpou (2009) noted that 86.5% of men visiting certain psychiatric clinics in Southwest Nigeria are diagnosed with erectile dysfunction. According to Abdullahi and Tukur (2013), sexual dysfunction should be conceptualised as a reoccurring problem during any stage of sexual response that inhibits sexual satisfaction from sexual activities in either one or both partners in an intimate relationship. It is also important to note that this sexual dissatisfaction might cause distress and could lead to overall relationship dissatisfaction. Oyekanmi et al. (2012) argued that there is a strong correlation between sexual dysfunction and overall relationship (dis)satisfaction. While some of the abovementioned authors described sexual dysfunction from a factual point of view, this study recognises that notions of sexual functioning, satisfaction, and pleasure (of others or self) are very subjective and deeply rooted in the perceptions and descriptions of the assessor. While most research and popular public discourse focus on sexual dysfunction (or feelings of related inadequacies) as a motivation for the use of traditional aphrodisiacs, this study is concerned with understanding why women generally might feel the need to use these traditional aphrodisiacs in their intimate unions.

Within these concerns around sex and sexual pleasure, men and women alike rely on various aphrodisiacs – traditional or Western – to boost the pleasure of their sexual experiences. In addition, demands for traditional aphrodisiacs are increasing because they are readily available, affordable, and believed to have beneficial effects (Chime 2009). However, Abdullahi and Tukur (2013) argued that women experience more of a need to be sexually ‘functional’ than men in Nigeria. Notwithstanding women’s desire to be more sexually pleasing to their partners, many women find it more difficult to ask for professional help because of various socio-cultural reasons (Alkali et al. 2015; Bello and Isah 2015). Some of these reasons include the fact that sex does not find its way into public debates; it is practised in the hidden, and euphemisms are often used to refer to sexual activities, which makes open conversation difficult. Talking about sex is often more complex for women as their sexuality tends to be regulated within cultural norms that act as regulatory frames (Alkali et al. 2015). As such, they rely on herb sellers and trusted friends for prescriptions of useful traditional aphrodisiacs. Some of the treatments usually offered to individuals/couples who desire to increase their sexual pleasure include

couples' therapy, tips on effective communication, the recommendation of artificial sexual aids, adopting various sexual positions, the prescription of pills, and the use of sexual stimulants (Abdullahi and Tukur 2013).

While anecdotal evidence in Nigeria suggests that the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women is increasing, there are very limited data to validate such claims (Bello and Isah 2013). Moreover, it is important to note that there is a cultural narrative that values virility and sexual health among men and women in Nigeria. For instance, an age-old practice that emphasises the importance of sexuality among most ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria is the use of traditional aphrodisiacs as sexual stimulants for men and women preparing for marriage or marital relationships in Northern Nigeria (Chime 2009; Bello and Isah 2015).

Bukar and Magashi (2013) opined that the practice of sexual stimulation with traditional aphrodisiacs is popular among women in Nigeria, but more common among women in Northern Nigeria because of its history within the region. In a cross-sectional study that assessed the prevalence of traditional aphrodisiacs among women in Kano State in Northern Nigeria, Bello and Isah (2015) reported that of the 378 women sampled, 42% (158) were frequent users of traditional aphrodisiacs and of this number, 52.8% were between the ages of 21 and 30. They argued that considering the demographics of the data, use is prevalent among adolescent girls and women in their first decade of marriage. With increasing public discourse on the use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Nigeria (Mohammed-Durosini 2009; Sahara Reporters 2009), it is important to understand the sociological relevance of this practice within the discourse of women's sexuality in Nigeria. It is against this background that this study explores why women within heterosexual relationships use traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria.

1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The desire to investigate this very 'hidden' but pertinent aspect of women's sexual life was influenced by an informal conversation I had with some senior colleagues at a workshop some years ago. A professor in the group narrated how a feud that had lasted for about three months between himself and his wife was resolved sexually. We all laughed and requested that he explain what he meant by 'settled sexually'. He narrated how a serious misunderstanding broke out with his wife and they did not speak for about three months but lived in the same house. However, after he returned from work on one of those days, he became unusually sexually

aroused and then found himself approaching his wife who was making food in the kitchen and they made love in a manner that he could not have imagined because it was very satisfying and different. In addition, their quarrel ended right after this sexual encounter, but the most intriguing part of the story was that the professor mentioned that after some months into their newfound peace, his wife confessed that she actually used a particular type of traditional aphrodisiac (*kayan mata*) to initiate the sexual encounter that ended their feud. She described the aphrodisiac and told her husband about its potency, and he even confessed to making love to other women in the time of their feud, which he ascribed to the perceived influence of the *kayan mata*. This was when I became more interested in the various types of traditional aphrodisiacs women use and how these influences their sexual agency, sexuality, and power in an intimate relationship.

As highlighted earlier, the practice of sexual stimulation is becoming very prevalent among women in Nigeria (Chime 2009; Bello and Isah 2015); hence, it has become a very relevant area of sociological investigation. Sociologists place considerable emphasis on the influence of socio-cultural norms, mores, and values on people across different cultural groups. It is within this reality of the ideal rites of passage for young men and women planning marriage in Northern Nigeria that the issue of stimulating sex for sexual satisfaction and fidelity becomes rife (Abdullahi and Tukur 2013). This implies that traditional aphrodisiacs are not just drawn upon for a personal desire to increase sexual pleasure but constitutes a historical cultural practice in the Northern Region of Nigeria. It is part of the belief systems that guide the process of marriage and marriage consummation in the region.

The use and popularity of specific types of traditional aphrodisiacs among women in Nigeria have been traced to cultural diffusion that resulted from the movement of people from core Northern Nigeria to other parts of the country. More interestingly, through globalisation the world is becoming smaller and cultural exchanges have intensified more than any other time in history. Through various platforms, people can learn the norms, values, and beliefs of people they come into contact with either physically or through virtual spaces (Ashraf and Galor 2007; Stromquist 2015). It is because of these mobilities that the use of traditional aphrodisiacs has diffused to other regions and is becoming a fascinating public discourse that influences women's sexual agency and sexuality in Nigeria.

Traditional aphrodisiacs are usually given to young women/men preparing for marriage in Northern Nigeria by older family members or friends as gifts to ensure that both partners

experience sexual satisfaction in the marriage (Chime 2009). In recent years, however, Abubakar (2009) and Chime (2009) argued that women in Nigeria are beginning to use traditional aphrodisiacs as a medium to gain power and control in intimate relationships. The narratives that promulgate the discourse of power in relation to women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Northern Nigerian suggest that a woman's ability to give a man a pleasurable sexual experience puts her in a position of influencing decisions within the familial terrain (Abubakar 2009; Chime 2009; Mohammed-Durosinslorun 2009; Sahara Reporters 2009; Garba, Yakasai and Magashi 2013).

The view that the use and social acceptance of aphrodisiacs among women in Nigeria are connected to women's desires to have decision-making influence over their sexual partners in intimate unions (Garba et al. 2013) became one of the major objectives of this study. Implicatively, the use of these traditional aphrodisiacs goes beyond increasing a woman's or a couple's sexual pleasure to representing an avenue through which women assert agency, ensure men's fidelity, and gain a significant position of personal and sexual relevance within heterosexual relationships. A similar argument was made by Scorgie et al. (2009), where the authors argued that the motivation for various sexual stimulating practices among women in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, went beyond women's desire to enhance men's sexual pleasure to a need to ensure men's fidelity and to gain control in their relationships.

The socio-cultural factors that influence the use of sexual stimulants by women in Nigeria necessitate an urgent need to examine how they influence women's sexual agency, sexual behaviour, and sexuality in general. Whyte, Van der Geest and Hardon (2002) argued that there is more to medicine than its pharmacological effects. Whyte et al. (2002: 3) maintained that there is a need to be 'more concerned with their social uses and consequences, than with their chemical structure and biological effects'. This study therefore examined the motivations for women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs; whether women view its use as giving them more pleasure, whether it ensures men's fidelity, and whether it enhances exercising control in the personal and sexual domain.

The use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women of Northern Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. It is historically regarded as a cultural practice and a rite of passage for marriage. It is believed that traditional aphrodisiacs are powerful substances that ensure sexual potency and relevance among women in polygamous marriages and a medium to ensure men's fidelity in a monogamous union. As the product becomes more rampant and floods Nigeria's social media,

there has been a debate about its orthodoxy. Some media reports posited that some men are feeling threatened at the unexplored prospects and the power it may afford women. While some women might perceive the use of traditional aphrodisiacs as a useful tool for redefining who they are and a medium for gaining power in intimate relationships, these issues have not been fully explored and theorised by sociologists. It is very important for sociologists to examine how this phenomenon could offer alternative narratives on heterosexual women's sexuality and sexual agency and the overall impact on intimate unions and negotiations within them.

This research, therefore, serve as a breakthrough in providing new empirical insights into why women in intimate relationships in Ilorin North-Central Nigeria use traditional aphrodisiacs and the purpose it serves. Apart from this, it is a frontier into researching the ways and manner in which the use of traditional aphrodisiacs influence notions of power in intimate relationships. The discussion in this thesis sparks new debates around how subtle/elusive measures are playing pivotal roles in the re-conceptualisation of power/sexual agency within intimate domains. The study brought to the fore the various strategies and practices evident among women in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, relating to the use of traditional aphrodisiacs and how it affects their lives and relationships. This topic has hitherto remained a hidden reality and has not gained sociological attention in Nigeria, especially in terms of how it shapes behaviour and practices.

In light of the above, the following research aim guided this study: *To examine the influence of using traditional aphrodisiacs on women's sexual agency and sexuality in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria.*

In order to achieve the research aim, the following research objectives were formulated as the fundamental basis of enquiry:

- 1) To understand why women in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, use traditional aphrodisiacs.
- 2) To gain insight into the most popular types of traditional aphrodisiacs.
- 3) To gain insight into men's opinions about women who use traditional aphrodisiacs for sexual enhancement.
- 4) To qualitatively establish women's views on the influence of traditional aphrodisiacs on their sexual agency in intimate relationships.

The questions below were fundamental to addressing the aim and objectives of this study. The broad research question was: *Why do women in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria,*

use traditional aphrodisiacs and what effect(s) do they believe these traditional aphrodisiacs have on their intimate relationships?

This research question was broken down into the following sub-questions:

- 1) Why do women in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, use traditional aphrodisiacs?
- 2) What are the most popular types of traditional aphrodisiacs used?
- 3) What are men's opinions about women in Ilorin who stimulate sex through the use of traditional aphrodisiacs and what are its implications for intimate relationships?
- 4) How does the use of traditional aphrodisiacs affect women's sexual agency within intimate relationships?

1.3 OVERVIEW OF OTHER CHAPTERS

Chapter Two explores various concepts related to intimate relationships and the familial terrain. Some of the issues conceptually discussed include the normative functions of marriages and families as important social structures and how gender relations are being altered within them. This is followed by a critical analysis of how both local and global forces of socio-economic transformation influence the emerging forms of gender relations within families and marriages. After providing these backgrounds to the changing nature of gender relations within marriages and sexual relationships, I take the position that women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs is potentially a factor that alters gender relations within familial spaces in Nigeria. After coming to terms with these conceptual discussions, the chapter, through African feminist models and social exchange theories, explores women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs further, especially how they influence women's agency and sexuality.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the research design. Before discussing the practicality of the research methods, I provide a detailed explanation of why women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs should be explored through a qualitative lens. Next is a detailed discussion of the research location where data were collected. Considering the nature of the study, it is important that I provide a proper context, so that the reader can appreciate the narratives that I offer. Following this section is a detailed description of the different qualitative methods adopted by the study in which I discuss how participants were selected, as well as the entire process of data collection and analysis. This is followed by a section that discusses the overall data-analysis

process. Finally, I discuss my positionality as a researcher and the ethical decisions made in this study.

The subsequent two chapters are empirical. The first of these empirical chapters, Chapter Four, provides background information on the world of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin. A special type of traditional aphrodisiac known as *kayan mata* is discussed as the most commonly used among women in Ilorin. Here, I critically explore women's narratives on why they use traditional aphrodisiacs. After identifying the common types of aphrodisiacs women use, I examine their influence on women's sexual intimacy, satisfaction, and fidelity. An exploration of men's perceptions of women who use traditional aphrodisiacs to stimulate sexual intercourse is also presented. Finally, a more in-depth exploration of how the issues that emerge from women's use of *kayan mata* affect women's sexual agency, sexual behaviour, and notions of womanhood is presented. Essentially, this chapter provides a descriptive account of the common narratives about traditional aphrodisiacs, while the following chapter discusses in detail the relation of this to women's lives and their sexuality.

Chapter Five, as the second empirical chapter, provides a more detailed and critical discussion of how the use of *kayan mata* influences women's sexual agency and gender relations within the familial/relationship terrain. I argue that women's belief that *kayan mata* increases desire and strengthens sexual/relationship intimacy is very fundamental and a factor that influences the popular use of these traditional aphrodisiacs. Interestingly, these aphrodisiacs are not just seen as sexual stimulants but as substances that give women some agentic powers in a relationship. The debate around the intense dereliction of gender-normative roles in relationships raises various issues for/against women's use of *kayan mata*. This chapter therefore uncovers the emerging issues and concerns in the use of *kayan mata* by women.

Chapter Six concludes the study and is the final chapter of this thesis. In this chapter, I bring together all the essential findings from the empirical chapters and present the theoretical conclusions and arguments based on the findings. This essential link to the theoretical analysis effectively examines how these women's experiences fit into and negate or augment theoretical tenets. Finally, the chapter ends with recommendations that stem from this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Contextualising the Use of Traditional Aphrodisiacs Within Intimate Relationships

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Family is one of the most vital social institutions and, like other social structures, is subject to changes and transition. Specifically, family systems are complex, dynamic, and highly intricate (Ekane 2013; Sooryamoorthy and Makhoba 2016). Amoateng, Heaton and Kalule-Sabiti (2007) argued that the complexities and intricacies of family systems across Africa are partly influenced by socio-cultural diversity, historical factors, and political formations (e.g. colonialism), among several other factors. For instance, the relationship between European settlers and indigenous Africans created a flux of multiple influences that affected various aspects of social life, including family structures (Ekeh 1990). Contemporary family patterns also change due to prevailing socio-economic conditions, educational access across gender, and health opportunities (Ekane 2013; Sooryamoorthy and Makhoba 2016). Family structure in Nigeria is also characterised by complexities, dynamism, and changing characteristics resulting from a unique history of colonialism, ethnic and tribal competition, and diverse contemporary socio-economic influences (Wusu and Isiugo-Abanihe 2006; Mberu 2007; Odimegwu and Adedini 2013).

It is important to understand the changes observable in family structures and composition across the globe for a better analysis of the various issues relating to its dynamics. One of these changes is the declining rate of fertility in some parts of the world (Mitchell and Gray 2007; Lam 2009), as well as the growth of smaller households (Diallo and Wodon 2007; Nayak and Behera 2014). There have also been increased incidences of marital dissolution and improvements in the rights and statuses of women (Seabrooke and Tsingou 2016; Hackenberg 2019). Additionally, frequent occurrences of childbearing outside the confines of marriage have produced phenomena such as ‘baby mamas’ and ‘sugar daddies’ in some places (Berrington, Perelli-Harris and Travena 2015; Indongo and Pazvakawambwa 2015; McLanahan and Sawhill 2015).

‘Baby mama’ and ‘sugar daddy’ are some of the most popular phenomena observable in the structure of the Nigerian family system. In Raheem’s (2018) study of the ‘baby mama’ trend and marriage practices in the Nigerian entertainment industry, the concept was defined as a

practice that ‘describes a lady (sic) who bears a child (or children) outside marriage’ (Raheem 2018: 41). In the same manner, ‘baby daddy’ describes a man who fathers a child outside wedlock. One of the unique characteristics of this union is that it seldom leads to present or future commitment in marriage. Interestingly, marital and non-marital relationships have become more dynamic as gender relations shift and change in intimate relationships. These changes have raised several questions and produced more complex relationship forms and dynamic family structures. These complex relationship forms are paralleled by changing gender roles evident within different domains of society and in the performance of gendered responsibilities and life choices.

Traditional in this study is conceptualised not in opposition to modernity, nor is it an affirmation of the normative understanding that signifies something of the past that needs to be surpassed for the new (modern) to be valued (Quijano 2000; Vázquez 2009). Rather, it is used in the sense of the indigenous that recognises the value within practices that might be peculiar to a region, people, and culture.

Traditional aphrodisiacs, agency, sexual agency, and power are important concepts that were operationalised in this study. I briefly discuss some of the ways these words are used. Traditional aphrodisiacs are any substance made from root, plant, or animal parts for stimulating sexual desire and increasing pleasure. Apart from having the ability to stimulate desire and increase performance during intimacy, clinical research suggests that most of these herbs and aphrodisiacs have anabolic and hormone-stimulating properties that are fundamental for infertility treatment (Muanya and Odukoya 2008).

Elder-Vass (2010) described agency as individual abilities to exercise conscious capacities as members of society without limitation or interference of social structures. Agency is a very complex concept that is often discussed in line with social structure. As argued by Wobst (2014), agency exists in a dialectical relationship to structures. This means that they interact closely; social structures are (re)produced or transformed by various forms of agency. What constitutes agency will therefore vary from one society to another and from one historical context to another. Cense (2019) proposed a multi-component model of sexual agency that advances that it spans through the social, moral, and contextual spectrums an individual navigates.

Sexual agency, on the other hand, can be defined from the perspective of basic human rights where you have the freedom to define and control your own sexuality without coercion or

exploitation (Jackson 1996). In addition, some other scholars focus on the role of sexuality and the body in the development of sexual identity. For instance, Bryant and Schofield (2007) argued that the body itself is a dynamic force that produces sexual subjectivities through sexual practices. This implies that sexual activities shape our sexual being and we are always in conversation with this process. This is deeper than just examining sexual agency from the surface level of sexual intercourse. According to Tolman (2012: 750), our body has the capacity to generate knowledge about context as well: 'by embodied desire, we designate sexual and pleasurable feelings in and of the body that constitutes a form of knowledge about the self, one's relationships and one's cultural or social worlds.' In addition, agency is strongly connected to power. McNay (2000: 16) defined agency as 'the capacity to manage the often discontinuous, overlapping or conflicting relations of power.' The relationship between agency and power was drawn upon in the narratives of several participants and it shows how being intentional about the construction of one's identity influences relations to power within an intimate relationship.

Within the context of this study, agency is conceptualised from the participants' perceptions of free will and the ability to express themselves without limitations. A woman's sexual 'agency' is, however, viewed as her ability to understand her sexuality and have an understanding of how she negotiates the construction of her own sexuality within intimate relations. Hence, it is approached from a very subjective dynamic point of view that draws from the participants' narratives.

Power, in the sense used, refers to sexual power and the ability of the woman to influence decisions within intimate relationships. One of the popular critiques of patriarchy is that it dominates and silences women. This study therefore examined claims of power and control as highlighted by some media reports about the use of certain traditional aphrodisiacs in Nigeria. It is also important to state that this study recognises power as a complex body of theory. However, its adoption in this thesis is in relation to the politics of intimate relationships and its dynamism.

This chapter highlights the reality that the family in contemporary times is a dynamic entity with increasing complexities. This dynamism and change is a complex process that often spans through intimate relationships, marriages, and the entire family system. This chapter will show that intimate relationships in Nigeria are subject to reshaping (to varying degrees) by women's intentional use of traditional aphrodisiacs (Abdullahi and Tukur 2013; Bello and Isah 2015).

In the first section, I reflect critically on the social construction of the concepts of ‘family’ and ‘marriage’ in Nigeria. This is done by arguing that the normative functions and structure of the family institution in Nigeria is changing, as the central importance and significance of marriage adapts.

In the second section, I show through the presentation of literature that the structure of families and marriages mirrors and builds on the emerging changes in the gender relation processes of intimate relationships as a whole (marital and non-marital). Furthermore, I argue that women’s use of traditional aphrodisiacs is influencing the nature of power relations and intimacy within unions. The use of traditional aphrodisiacs is argued to give women the advantage of using sex as a tool for negotiation in intimate relationships. In addition, these aphrodisiacs are noted to enhance sexual desire to stimulate sex and it thus has implications for the endurance of relationships, marriages, and families.

In the last section, I present a theoretical discussion. I examine how women’s use of traditional aphrodisiacs may reflect the arguments of major West African Feminists/Feminism (WAF) that women across various cultures in Africa adopt – they entail different strategies, mechanisms, and approaches to negotiate (around and with) patriarchy in different contexts. I discuss how the popular principles of WAF, such as compromise, complementarity, shared values, and communality are relevant to the debate on women’s use of traditional aphrodisiacs and their influence on their sexual agency. In addition, I adopt the arguments of the social exchange theory to explain how sex can be used as a tool for exchange and negotiation in an intimate relationship. The crux of this study is to examine how women’s use of traditional aphrodisiacs to stimulate sexual intercourse influences their sexual prowess, agency, and power. The social exchange theory – incorporating sexual politics – therefore provides a viable theoretical frame to examine sexual enhancement from an exchange point of view.

2.2 A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ‘FAMILY’ AND ‘MARRIAGE’ WITHIN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

The family has endured as an important social institution the world over. Over the years, the family structure continues to evolve in response to various social and economic factors. Family patterns and structures differ across cultures and change over time. Scholars have argued that traditional family typologies are fast evolving and new forms of socio-relational processes are emerging within this social unit across the world (Ruggles 2012; Bianchi 2014).

Sociologists have offered various definitions of family but the emphasis here is on its manifestations, organisations, and structures across various cultures. This implies that there are no universal definitions for the family because it is a social structure that consists of different units that might be unique or similar across and within cultures. For instance, Okodudu (2010) defined family as a social institution, which primarily consists of a couple and their children. This definition, however, limits the conceptualisation of family to the nuclear unit and does not describe other forms of association patterns that consist of individuals apart from couples and children that are related by blood. In addition, it excludes social parenting, adoption, and fosterage. Ingiabuna, Olumati and Sele (2003), recognising the complexity of defining family based on the size or composition, instead considered its primary function as a social unit in their definition. They defined family as a universal institution whose principal duties are to facilitate socialisation and nurture members irrespective of size, composition, and relatedness by blood. Ingiabuna et al. (2003) were of the opinion that the economic and socio-cultural responsibilities, as well as the shared moral bonds within this group, are the most significant elements of the family. Farley (1994) gave a comprehensive description of family as a social group whose members could be related by either blood, common ancestry, marriage or committed sexual relationships, adoption, or living together, and are bound by various socio-cultural responsibilities.

Family serves as one of the first social institutions that instils norms, morals, values, and mores into children (Olutayo and Akanle 2007). From a very young age, children are taught, through various mediums within the family, the accepted behaviours of their society to be conforming adults. Family formations are the most basic social units that play a pivotal role in socialising and re-socialising people. Despite the variety of family types, family is an institution found in every society and performs very essential roles in the survival of such a society. Children are socialised within extended and nuclear forms and can be brought up in single-mother households, as well as in units of monogamous or polygamous family setups. People do not necessarily need to identify with the nuclear unit of a family to reproduce or bear children. Recently in Nigeria, there have been more cases of reproduction outside wedlock, or, as already referred to, the 'baby mama' phenomenon (Ezumah 2003; Ojedokun 2015). In addition to the socialisation function of the family, it performs nurturing roles that not only provide for children but even adult members; it includes feeding, education, and the provision of care (Ajomale 2007). The family is thus seen as an institution that provides material and emotional security. This entails that the material and psychological needs of members are met by the

provision of necessary economic, psychological, and social support (Okumagba 2011). Family members usually see themselves as sharing a close affinity with one another; hence, it is one of the places where they can get affection and companionship (Umeora et al. 2011).

The diversity of family structures has complicated socialisation and nurturing processes. So-called traditional norms that prescribe that children grow up in a typical heterosexual family are fast changing. Enhanced complexities in the structures of families are observable not just in Nigeria but throughout the world. Observable changes and dynamics within family structures as discussed raise questions on what the outcomes of socialisation in these varying family environments will look like. For instance, Patterson, Farr and Hastlings (2015), in their examination of socialisation in the context of family diversity, noted that one of the cultural prescriptions of 'traditional' family is that children are better socialised and catered for when they have a two-parent system than one. This is at least partly because of access to greater economic resources and the availability of mutual extensive social support networks. However, this is less important in contemporary families where a single parent with considerable economic resources now provides positive socialisation support for their children.

Across Nigeria, marriage has been commonplace and couples most often marry before having children (Otite 1991). Research shows that marriage is a normative process preceding procreation and starting a family unit (Feyisetan and Bankole 2009; James 2010). However, caution must be applied to the understanding of 'normative', as practices and cultural beliefs are highly susceptible to social change and transformation. Having children within the confines of marriage is one of the norms that can be argued to police the reproductive sphere in Nigeria and which exacerbates the stigmatisation of pregnancy outside wedlock (Alabi 2018).

While marriage is a common social institution across various societies, its definition is quite complex. This complexity stems from the fact that there are numerous marriage arrangements visible in different societies and across time. In fact, in more recent times, the legitimacy of marriage and its traditional relevance are highly critiqued and debated in Nigeria (Smith 2007; George, Ukpong and Imah 2014; Smith 2016).

Across Nigeria, marriage is a union between two consenting adults (usually male and female), which normatively requires the expression of support and approval of both families of the partners (Karanja 2018). Marriage in this context is legally heterosexual and often patriarchal. It is also not just the coming together of two consenting adults but of two families. Igbo (2003) explicated the patriarchal nature of Nigerian marriages when he explained that the institution

gives men power over women. He describes this as '*uxorem*' and '*genetricem*' rights. *Uxorem* is men's claim to women's domesticity and justification for constant demand for sex, while *genetricem* is the right over her offspring. This also determines the division of socio-economic activities and responsibilities within the home; while men are expected to be providers, women are required to be domestic (Para-Mallam 2017).

In addition, religion is another institution that shapes the nature and structure of marriages and families in Nigeria. Aside from the cultural normativity of what marriages and families should look like, religious sects also prescribe their own marriage/family patterns. Christian marriages are built on the doctrines of the Bible and patterned after the structure believed to have been outlined by God for Adam and Eve (Orukpe and Omoruyi 2018). This type of marriage preaches monogamy, sexual chastity, and purity, and frowns upon divorce and adultery within a relationship. According to Oforchukwu (2019), Christian marriage is considered unique because it was instituted by 'God as a sacrament'. However, this claim of uniqueness is not peculiar to Christianity as every marriage structure within its founding belief system is considered unique and beneficial to the practitioner. Islamic marriage, on the other hand, is built on the tenets of Islamic law. This marriage arrangement permits polygyny. A man is allowed to take up to four wives as long as he is able to love and cater to them equally (Doma-Kutigi 2019). The distribution of love and care equally between four women remains a highly debated issue within the narrative of Islamic marriage in Nigeria. Moreover, the acceptance of polygyny within Islam creates a common ground between Islamic marriage and customary marriage in Nigeria. Both allow men to take more than one woman and this is considered as one of the socio-cultural and religious imperatives that sustain patriarchy in Nigeria (Fenske 2015; Munro et al. 2019).

Marriage in Nigeria as an 'institution' or 'social practice' is more complex than the classifications discussed in the preceding paragraph. Intimate relationships have produced other forms of family structures that are different in structure and consummation process from monogamy and polygamy. Ojedokun (2015) argued that infidelity, and recognition that extramarital affairs persist, have complicated the terrain of intimacy study in Nigeria. He argued that relationships have become very dynamic and unstable. Some of these changes include an increase in single-parent households, cohabiting, baby mamas, and varying forms of sexual relationships. Adegoke (2010) noted that divorce is on the increase in Nigeria for various reasons; however, the role of infidelity in the dissolution of marital unions is very significant. Consequently, revenge-cheating has complicated trust in intimate relationships and

enhanced relationship infidelity (Ojedokun 2015). In addition, the phenomenon of baby mamas and cohabitation has increased as several individuals not only subscribe to having sexual relationships and living together without formalising their unions but also having children through these arrangements (Duyilemi, Tunde-Awe and Lois 2018; Raheem 2018).

The discussion thus far highlights not just the complexity in the structure or nature of marriages and families in Nigeria, but also their dynamism. This thesis discusses some of these complexities and dynamism in the conceptualisation and discussion of marriage, families, intimacy, and relationships in Nigeria. Beyond the structure and nature of these institutions, roles and responsibilities are also not clearly marked anymore. In this regard, Onuche (2013: 92) described marriage as ‘a complex affair with economic, social and religious aspects which often overlap so firmly that they cannot be separated from one another’. This implies that other social institutions such as the economy, culture, and religion are having a visible influence on the nature of marriage and its dynamism. It is also important to state that with the emergence of a fast globalising world, ideas, norms, practices, values, and morals are constantly being shared across geographical spaces and all these affect people’s lives and choices.

2.2.1 Emerging gender relations within the familial terrain: The impact of economic and socio-cultural changes on Nigerian marriages and families

Nigeria, like most parts of the world, is being reshaped by the combined effects of various socio-cultural, political, and economic factors. These changes are very evident in the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the nation, resulting in major changes in various social institutions. I examine the changing nature of family and marriage in this section to understand how gender relation processes are affected in intimate relationships. These changes are examined in terms of gender role expectations, performance, and systems of relations. As explained earlier, the family institution is defined as a combination of kin with the performance of a gendered mutual obligation for the survival of its entirety. The family itself is a broad concept without a consensus definition, while marriage is said to be a very vital aspect of family composition and survival (Phillips 2018).

Earlier in this chapter, I highlighted some of the roles performed by families in Nigeria. Some of these functions include nurturing and socialisation of children and the provision of emotional and social support for all its members. However, with increased interconnectivity and

globalisation (within socio-cultural and economic landscapes), the nature and structure of gender relations have been affected and changes have become feasible. It has become easy to learn the ways of life of other groups, and cultures have not just become diffused but have been interwoven. These changes do not only emerge because of the new conditions that (re)order economic, political, and cultural relations, but because humans are also constantly interacting with cultures, people, and milieus outside their geographical locations. In this section, I argue that the Nigerian family and marriage systems are responding to these changes in various ways, including inter-regional assimilation/integration of various cultural norms and values about marriage, family structure(s), and social relations. Secondly, these arguments provide an insightful introduction into the social conditions that create the conditions for the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women in intimate relationships in contemporary Nigeria.

A common argument in the literature that examines the changing nature of families and marriages in Nigeria is that the emergence of enhanced economic opportunities and increased participation of women in the economy have fractured the 'traditional' functions of the family (Omadjohwoefe 2011; Jamabo and Ordu 2012; Makama 2013). However, I argue, firstly, that this conception of women's traditional role as solely domestic is problematic, stereotypical, limiting, and redundant. Secondly, I argue that this assertion undermines the significant economic contributions of women across cultures in Nigeria. Mbah and Azubike (2015) argued that women played very significant economic roles in traditional Nigerian societies. They argued that women were significant wage earners who played very important roles in the farming, fishing, and commerce industries. In fact, women's roles are very important to the economic survival of most communities. This therefore challenges the idea that seeks to describe most African traditional societies as inherently excluding women from economic activities. While there are many historical trajectories that led to the reduction of women in formal labour employment, the assumptions highlighted above that mostly describe women's role as traditional and domesticated are very crucial for critiquing gender relation fallacies. Moreover, in this section I focus on how gender relation processes are fast changing in contemporary Nigerian families and marriages.

Some scholars have argued that the transformation in the dynamics of intimate marital relationships gives women an advantage to leverage emotions and sexual exchanges to negotiate domestic arrangements (Rebhun 1999; Hirsch 2003). While these arguments have not been greatly debated in the empirical literature, they offer some insights into the changing nature of marriages and subsequently families in Nigeria. Bello's (2017) analysis of the

challenge's women face in contemporary Nigeria details how intimate relationships are being altered. Bello (2017) explained how these challenges are addressed through different mediums by women, such as empowerment campaigns, establishing various organisations to provide support for women in abusive relationships, and increased legal representation, among others. Some of these popular challenges include that women have no or limited rights in choosing their marriage partners. Divorce is usually discouraged, and women were usually scared to take this route because they feared stigmatisation. Women were usually perceived as sources of sexual pleasure, as satisfying men's sexual needs without much agency in negotiating their placement in these relationships. Marital rape was very common as husbands claim ownership to women's bodies and could beat them without much repercussion.

Bello (2017) argued that education, enhanced economic opportunities, and the emergence of various empowerment initiatives have become the mechanisms through which women survived and tackled some of the challenges discussed above. Implicatively, as women claim more agency in decision making within intimate relationships, their relationships with their (male) partners are changing fast. More women can now negotiate their participation in sexual activities in intimate relationships; adolescents and women, in particular, are more open to exploring different aspects of their sexuality and, more importantly, more women now leverage their agency over their sexuality to negotiate other resources within intimate relationships.

In addition to arguments in the literature that discuss women's empowerment from the perspective of education and more gender-equitable legislation, the discussion presented through the systematic review of literature in this section shows that infidelity is rife, which creates an environment of competition between women both in marital and non-marital unions, which might influence their decision to use traditional aphrodisiacs.

The next section critically examines various arguments that relate women's use of various traditional aphrodisiacs in intimate relationships to empowerment. While this section presents popular debates in literature about women's empowerment and use of sexual stimulants, this study explored in detail its relatedness.

2.3 WOMEN'S USE OF TRADITIONAL APHRODISIACS AND CHANGING RELATIONAL PROCESSES IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS IN NIGERIA

This section builds on the arguments provided above that changes within families and marriages in Nigeria are not only as a result of women's increased access to education and

better economic opportunities, but also because of the resurgence and modification of certain cultural practices for sexual enhancement, especially in the Northern Region of Nigeria. Here I discuss how the use of various traditional aphrodisiacs by women are (re)shaping gender relations in marriages, families, and society. I begin with a general discussion of the meaning of aphrodisiacs and their connection to traditional medicine to understand how their use influences sexual pleasure and satisfaction.

2.3.1 The meaning of ‘aphrodisiac’

The word ‘aphrodisiac’ is derived from the Greek word *aphrodite*, which means ‘foam-born’, used to refer to the goddess of love and beauty (Faraone and Faraone 2009). Greek mythology records that Aphrodite was born when Uranus (the father of the gods) was castrated by his son Cronus (Graves 2017). Cronus threw his father’s severed genitals into the ocean, which began to foam. From the *aphros* (seafoam) arose Aphrodite and the sea carried her to Cythera. ‘Aphrodisiac’ became a popular word that refers to sexual aura, beauty, and love (Graves 2017). Faraone and Farone (2009) mentioned that ‘aphrodisiac’ therefore became a word that is used to describe substances for the enhancement of sexual desire. Ramawat (2009: 482) described this sexual desire as ‘venereal desire’, which means sexual appetite, and the desire to stimulate sex. However, some scholars argue that stimulation of sexual appetite is not directly correlational to increased ability to satisfy a sexual desire (Meston et al. 2004; Ojewole 2007; Zhang 2007). Rättsch and Müller-Ebeling (2013) provided a broader conceptualisation of aphrodisiacs when they argued that an aphrodisiac is any substance that increases the drive for sex and stimulates enjoyment. Aphrodisiacs, also referred to as traditional sexual stimulants in this study, are age-old herbal substances that are believed to produce stimulating/pleasurable effects during sexual intercourse (Kamatenesi-Mugisha and Oryem-Origa 2005).

An expanded review of literature on the use of aphrodisiacs revealed that there are different types of aphrodisiacs. Just like they come in varying substances (food items, perfumes, liquids, among several others), their purposes also differ. Aphrodisiacs are generally classified into two categories: those agents that specifically increase libido (sexual desire) and those agents that increase the ability to indulge in sexual activity (increasing potency) (Shamloul 2010; Balasubramani, Seethapathy and Venkatasubramanian 2011). Malviya et al. (2011) linked sexual potency to an enhanced and sustained erection. Aphrodisiacs that fall in this category are used by men to treat impotence and are administered to individuals who suffer from erectile dysfunction. This treatment could be in the form of oral medication that administers

aphrodisiacs such as *yohimbine*, an aphrodisiac obtained from the bark of a West African tree, *Pausinystalia yohimbe*, which was first isolated in 1896. It is commonly used to increase sexual potency and virility by African and West Indian traditional medicine practitioners.

Another popular brand is Spanish Fly, which comes from blister beetles, usually black or bronze green. They are commonly found in Africa, Asia, and Southern Europe. The aphrodisiac reputation of Spanish Fly probably rests upon its ability to cause irritation to the urethra with resultant vascular congestion and inflammation of the erectile tissue in male or female genitalia – a sensation that may be interpreted as enhanced sexuality. Another is *vuka-vuka*, which literally means ‘wake up’, and is a common traditional sexual stimulant among Ndebele men in Zimbabwe. *Tribulus terrestris* is a common plant seen growing on roadsides and around hills in the western part of Asia, southern Europe, and some parts of Africa. It is known to increase the sexual potency of men. Finally, *maca* is a common supplement for improving energy, fertility, and sexual potency in the Andean region of South America (Gonzales 2012). On the other hand, aphrodisiacs that enhance sexual desire are meant to improve the pleasure in sexual response through the stimulation of sexual hormonal concentration (Shamloul 2010).

Over the years, pharmacologists and traditional medicine practitioners have identified various animal parts, mineral substances, and plants with aphrodisiac properties (Melnik and Marcone 2011; Van Andel, Myren and Van Onselen 2012). However, for this study, Garba et al.’s (2013) definition of aphrodisiacs as any agent/substance (food or drugs) that arouses sexual desire will be more suitable for the nature of aphrodisiacs discussed in this thesis. Patel et al. (2011) described aphrodisiacs as food or drinks, rare herbal compounds or pharmaceuticals, amulets, or psychic manipulations that enhance sexual desire. The meaning, expression, and conceptualisation of sexual desire are very dynamic because it is socially constructed and highly subjective. From a biological view, maintaining sexual virility varies across sexes because of differences in physiological makeup (Zanolari 2003). Notwithstanding, men and women alike continue to invest and commit resources to improve their erotic vigour in their diverse forms (Bella and Shamloul 2014; West and Krychman 2015).

Further reiterating the importance of aphrodisiacs for sexuality, Van Andel et al. (2012) noted that they are a medium through which humans preserve, recapture, and increase sexual capacity or stimulate sexual desire. Some authors argue that the essential benchmark of a successful sexual encounter is for a male to be able to penetrate the vagina and achieve ejaculation after successfully pleasuring the woman (Montorsi, Padma-Nathan and Glina 2006). This would

imply that both partners are active participants who seek sexual satisfaction and pleasure during sexual intimacy (McClelland 2014; Opperman et al. 2014). Moreover, researchers continue to advocate different reasons beyond sexual pleasure as motivating human untiring zeal and commitment to the development, production, and continual utilisation of various substances to stimulate/enhance sexual activities (Van Andel et al. 2012). This study is one of such attempts to argue that the use of traditional sexual stimulants by women in Ilorin transcend sexual pleasure to issues of power relations in intimate relationships.

2.3.2 Some examples across the globe of the utilisation of aphrodisiacs

This section provides a discussion of the presence and utilisation of aphrodisiacs across different regions of the globe. It also shows that within some geographies, aphrodisiacs are strongly connected to religious and cultural beliefs about sex and sexuality. For instance, the praise of virility and glorification of manhood were very common among the people who lived in the caves of Ajanta in India, the court of love in the medieval periods, Mayan and Incan civilization, as well as noticeable in the various adulthood initiation practices across Africa (Van Andel et al. 2012).

Bella and Shamloul (2014) mentioned that honey, milk, ghee, and eggs were ingredients in the *Kama Sutra*, which is an ancient text on the sex of the Hindu people of India. These ingredients contain high levels of a protein that were believed to supplement men's sexual strength. Petrovska (2012) discussed how the use of herbal medicine for longevity and sexual vigour has always been important to the Chinese. These aphrodisiacs were usually made from plants such as ginseng root. In addition, aphrodisiacs, love potions, and other forms of sexually stimulating substances were very common among Greek people (Storl 2012). This was because they had a culture that celebrated sexuality, signified through various rituals (Luck 2006). Coontz (2006) noted that recipes of love potions, philtres, and aphrodisiacs of all sorts were common among the Romans. In fact, they also had aphrodisiacs that could reduce sexual urges (Shamloul 2010). Also, among the Arabs, olive oil, orchids, garden carrot seed, turnip seed, ash of the leaf of oleander, dry alum, magpie excrement, powdered willow leaves, and the pits of fine dates were common aphrodisiac ingredients for women (Shamloul 2010; Lyons 2011).

More recently, the relevance of sexual virility is further evidenced by the heightened commercialisation and flourishing business nature of aphrodisiacs in general and traditional sexual stimulants across Africa in particular (Aderinto 2012). The Internet has contributed to

the expansion and popularity of aphrodisiacs in West Africa. Moreover, aphrodisiacs of all forms and from different global regions have become available to interested individuals and are now tagged as sexual ‘magic potions’ in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, and Benin (Aderinto 2012).

Furthermore, aphrodisiacs are a part of traditional medicine across most societies. Over 75% of the world’s population use traditional medicines and the majority of this group are in Africa and Asia (Oreagba, Oshikoya and Amachree 2011; Bello and Isah 2015). It is important to note that traditional medicine and its products continue to transcend borders and people rely on them to address various health challenges, including aphrodisiacs for sexual pleasure and satisfaction (Oreagba et al. 2011). The world over, people usually develop various healing measures in line with their cultures, beliefs, and customs to satisfy their health needs or those of their communities (Abdullahi 2011). As such, aphrodisiacs form part of the traditional health practices of different societies across the globe.

Contextually, Bello and Isah (2015) argued that traditional medicine is historically an institution that has and continues to provide curative services for various illnesses and diseases in Nigeria. These medicines are believed to be effective in treating diseases such as hypertension, stroke, insomnia, diarrhoea, urinary tract infection, intestinal parasites, infected wounds, and impotency, among others. As traditional medicine continues to gain prominence, some authors have suggested that its impact on sexual and reproductive health treatment is increasing (Abdullahi and Tukur 2013). Apart from the fact that they are important in curing various health concerns such as sexual impotence and erectile dysfunction, they have also become very popular for producing various products for stimulating sexual intercourse for men and women (Etuk et al. 2009).

The search for substances that ignite passion and increase sexual appetites cuts across cultures and continents. For a very long time, Viagra occupied the centre stage in the media, which simultaneously created massive public interest in stimulating sex. However, this interest also had a knock-on effect, which led to increased sales and popularity of traditional aphrodisiacs, especially in Africa (Govindasamy et al. 2007). For instance, Agea et al. (2008) reported that over a tonne of *mkombelo* root is consumed monthly in Kakamega Town, Kenya. While men and adolescent boys are identified as the major consumers, sellers of the product identify women and adolescent girls as ‘hidden’ consumers (Agea et al. 2008: 405).

Mondia whytei is one of the fastest-growing traditional aphrodisiacs sold to both old and young people on the streets of most cities in West, East, and sub-Saharan Africa (Agea et al. 2008). The *Mondia whytei* plant is very common in the tropical rain forest of Kenya, the coastal regions of Malawi and Uganda, in Zimbabwe, and in South Africa (Agea et al. 2008). The threat of extinction posed to this plant in some regions of Africa could be because of its continual use for various herbal processes (Agea et al. 2008) and possibly because of the extreme/rapid urban growth in these regions. Agea et al. (2008) mentioned that *Mondia whytei* is used for traditional herbal mixtures that act as a natural appetizer; enhancer of cerebral and peripheral blood circulation; the treatment of stroke, hypertension, anaemia, asthma, and measles; to improve sleep; and to increase body warmth, among several other uses. All the medicinal roles this plant performs are overshadowed by the belief that it cures impotence, enhances sexual desire, and cures sexually transmitted diseases (Agea et al. 2008). This perceived sexual benefit has created a booming market for the conversion of the plant into various substances for sexual stimulation and impotency treatment. Other popular aphrodisiacs in East and Southern Africa include *kafupa* and *mutototo*, which are very common in the cities of Zambia. These products are believed to increase men's libido and give them strength for prolonged sexual intercourse (Pintu 2013).

Nigerians use diverse herbal products as sexual stimulants; some made in the country and others imported from neighbouring countries such as Ghana, Togo, Mali, and Benin. These herbal mixtures are used by both men and women and are widely sold on the streets of major cities in Nigeria. They include mixtures such as *sobonton* and *ponkiriya* that are believed to have a strong effect on sex, potency, and pleasure. While the use of traditional aphrodisiacs is more rampant among men and adolescent boys in Nigeria, women also use these products for various reasons. The various traditional aphrodisiacs¹ used by women in Northern Nigeria are grouped as *kayan mata*, which includes sexual stimulants such as *zuman-mata*, *tsumi*, and *danagadas*.

2.3.3 Sexual stimulation, power dynamics, and the politics of the home: Women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs (*kayan mata*) in Northern Nigeria

Chime (2009) noted that the use of certain traditional aphrodisiacs like *kayan mata* is a cultural practice among women in Northern Nigeria and anecdotal evidence shows that it has lasted

¹ This consists of all indigenous aphrodisiacs commonly used by women in Northern Nigeria. They are made from roots, herbs, and parts of animals.

for approximately five centuries. Garba et al. (2013) argued that irrespective of the lack of scientific evidence on the effectiveness of these traditional aphrodisiacs, men and women continue to use it to increase the pleasure of their sexual experiences. In the same vein, the use of traditional aphrodisiacs to enhance sexual satisfaction and control is widespread among women in Northern Nigeria for various socio-cultural reasons (Garba et al. 2013). Sahara Reporters (2009: 1) noted that '[m]en trying to keep several wives happy and women competing with co-wives for their husbands' attention has led to a boom in the sale of herbal aphrodisiacs in predominantly Muslim Northern Nigeria. Demand for sex stimulants has been unprecedented in the last four years'.

There are various reasons why men and women use these products. While men depend on these traditional aphrodisiacs to sexually satisfy their wives (sexual potency), women not only rely on the products to sexually satisfy their spouses but to also get their attention and gain higher negotiation power in the politics of the home (Mohammed-Durosini 2009; Sahara Reporters 2009; Abdullahi and Tukur 2013; Nna et al. 2014). The desire for women to control men is a strong motivating factor for using traditional sexual stimulants in Nigeria (Abubakar 2009; *The Guardian* 2014). The belief is that satisfying a man's sexual urge not only ensures his fidelity but also gives the woman a form of control over him (Sahara Reporters 2009).

This emerging revelation about the effects of traditional aphrodisiacs (*kayan mata*) over men has sparked debates in the media (Chime 2009). These products have also been reported to be used by young girls who are in romantic relationships with older men to control them and extort money and other resources from them (Chime 2009). There are diverse perceptions of the use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Nigeria. Some men believe the use of traditional aphrodisiacs such as *kayan mata* should be regulated because it has hypnotising effects, while some women are of the opinion that it should be encouraged and used by more women because it allows women to exercise agency in sexual relationships (Abubakar 2009; *The Guardian* 2014). The belief that these traditional aphrodisiacs might be *juju* has constituted a major debate in the media since they not only enhance sexual performance, but arguably give women control over men (Abubakar 2009; Chime 2009; *The Guardian* 2014). It has been critiqued by several media reports as an unconventional medium of hypnotising men in Nigeria (Chime 2009; Balash 2016).

However, in places like Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, and Zamfara² states where the practice is apparently very popular, the best gifts a newly wedded bride can receive from her mother-in-law are these locally produced sexual stimulants (Chime 2009). It shows how much she is loved as a wife and that she is welcomed into the family. When the woman does not receive these gifts as a new bride, it is usually believed she is not liked or welcomed. The controversies around the use of traditional aphrodisiacs by men and women in Nigeria have made it an ongoing debate in the public as well as academic domains. The growing practice and prevalence of traditional aphrodisiacs also have immense sociological relevance as it raises issues about sexual intimacy, power, and sexual agency that affect marital and non-marital relationships in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria.

2.4 APPRAISING THE EFFICACY OF TRADITIONAL APHRODISIACS

The scientific nature of various traditional aphrodisiacs has remained a contentious debate. Notwithstanding the popularity of these traditional aphrodisiacs, there are debates around their validity and potency within the biomedical community (Zhang 2007). Shamloul (2010) argued that the puritanical values of Western medical ideology have not paid much attention to the biological and scientific basis of traditional aphrodisiacs. Moreover, very little research has investigated the validity of these aphrodisiacs in stimulating sex. The validity of traditional aphrodisiacs has been hampered by several reasons, including the fact that desire cannot be accurately measured (Sell 2007). The subjective nature of desire is a major challenge to ascertaining the scientific nature of these aphrodisiacs.

Aphrodisiacs have always served as substances that play active roles within the sexual narratives of most societies (Van Andel et al. 2012). Examining the effect of traditional aphrodisiacs within the context of sociology therefore requires understanding how its use affects people's belief systems and behavioural practices. In addition, the gratification of sexual urges is an existential human need and, as such, various practices and norms remain sacrosanct across cultures in response to meeting these sexual needs. Buthelezi (2006), while discussing the perception of sex among the Zulu people of South Africa, mentioned that sexual gratification has always been perceived as an important human need and, as such, practices such as *ukusoma* (non-penetrative sex) was accepted as an appropriate way to satisfy young people's sexual desires without having to engage in penetrative sex until religion and

² These places are core northern regions in Nigeria.

colonialism eroded practices such as this. Part of the strategies used to discourage practices such as *ukusoma* was teachings that taboo all sexual practices outside marriage; these teachings taught that all sexual activities outside the confines of what is prescribed in the Bible (monogamous marriage) was unacceptable and a sin to God (Buthelezi 2006; Harrison 2008).

Interestingly, recodification of normative values as highlighted above is part of the arguments advanced in the literature on the impact of colonialism on African cultural values and practices. For instance, Igboin (2011) argued that colonialism significantly altered the values, beliefs, common practices, and ways of life and living of Africans, to the point where these important cultural structures were almost eroded. Christian missionaries, for example, began to demonise certain practices and beliefs; teaching that they were not worthy for spiritual, moral, and social upliftment. Moreover, Harrison (2008) argued that these demonising teachings were essential because the practice was not in congruence with the rudiments of Christianity and needed to be ousted in order to convert local Africans; hence, for them to be developed and advanced like the 'missionaries', they needed to do away with these archaic and traditional beliefs and practices. Nkomazana and Setume (2016) captured this well in their analysis of the expansion of Christianity in the Bechuanaland protectorate around the 18th and 19th century. They argued that Christianity, as one of the major weapons of colonialism, 'treated African religions as evil and did everything possible to ensure that they were ousted'. The Western missionaries believed that traditional religious beliefs and practices were inferior, and together with the traditional customs, had to be done away with before the acceptance of Christianity. However, this was vehemently resisted. Despite this resistance, some of these traditional practices were eroded, altered, and some practices infiltrated.

2.5 USING APHRODISIACS FOR A BETTER SEXUAL EXPERIENCE: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SEXUAL DESIRE

Sexual desire reflects gender constructions and gendered learning about bodies. The definition of sexual desire might vary among individuals. For instance, some scholars define sexual desire from the perspective of desiring sexual activity, craving sexual intimacy, and the feelings associated with thinking about an attractive partner (Murray and Milhausen 2012; Brotto and Smith 2014). Furthermore, others believe that sexual desire is more associated with sexual motivation or interest, which usually manifests in desiring various sexual activities and pleasure (Althof et al. 2017; Kontula 2018).

The definitions of sexual desire presented above are quite limiting as they link sexual desire solely to subjective awareness and interest without considering other areas such as sexual satisfaction and the diverse ways in which individuals can manifest and experience sexual desire. Scholars who adopt and operationalise sexual desire in this manner assume a narrow spectrum of desire that reduces human feeling into simple cravings for sex and a combination of sexual fantasies. The recognition of these inadequacies in the definition and conceptualisation of sexual desire informed Levine's (2002: 39) thought that 'in anyone's hands, sexual desire can be a slippery concept'. This fluid nature of sexual desire has attracted research attention from the social sciences and public health domain, yet with no consensus on a holistic definition. Its complexity is further entrenched in the very subjective nature of sexual desire and its connection to sexual arousal and libido. Bancroft (2010) and Bancroft and Graham (2011) provided a distinction between sexual desire and sexual arousal when they argued that the former is a state of sexual arousal and not a description of its entire component. It suffices to say, therefore, that while sexual desire might describe some part of sexual arousal, they do not necessarily mean the same thing and should not be used interchangeably. There is therefore a need for a clearer understanding of both concepts.

As research interest in the understanding of sexual desire deepened, researchers also distinguished between solitary sexual desire and dyadic sexual desire. Solitary sexual desire is seen as the sexual interaction and exploration that happen within a person, and dyadic sexual desire is sexual interaction with a partner (Davis et al. 1998; Van Andel et al. 2012). While this is very fundamental in the understanding of sexual desire, dyadic sexual desire is overly simplistic. This is because it is dualistic and does not necessarily account for more complex sexual interactions between partners of varying sexual orientations and groups. The explanation of sexual desires within a dualistic confine might be an unintentional/intentional approval of normative binary gender roles and expectations of sexual orientation.

2.5.1 How sexual is sexual desire? Understanding desire beyond sexual activities

As argued in the previous section, sexual desire is often conceptualised within the spectrum of sexual activities. I argue that experiencing and manifesting desire may actually be multidimensional – individuals may manifest desire in different ways that might not necessarily be sexual. As Brotto (2010) described, a woman might not personally desire orgasm but might desire to engage in sexual activity to please her partner. This might be one of those ways that exemplify that a woman's sexual desire is motivated by a desire to nurture (fulfil) her partner's

sexual cravings rather than her personal sexual desire. In this light, Edelstein, Chopik and Kean (2011) argued that socio-sexuality influences women's sexual behaviours. It is believed that women are often more interested in fulfilling the sexual desires of their partners against the exploration and fulfilment of their own sexual urges. Following the example that was given of women nurturing the sexual cravings of their partners, Edelstein et al. (2011) reiterated the point that women often engage in sexual activities to make their partner happy and take less time to explore their own sexual needs. This implies that while sexual desire and sexual activities might be closely related and linked, there are other aspects of desire that are not completely sexual, especially with the recognition of the socio-cultural factors that influence sexual expression and experiences.

Sexual desire is therefore more complex than just the desire to initiate and engage in sexual intercourse. Rather, it might manifest in various ways, such as nurturance or a desire to fulfil normative sexual role expectations and even as mediums to negotiate power. Therefore, for some women, the desire to actually have sex might be a medium to show love to their partners, build intimacy, and strengthen the bond in their relationship (Meana 2010). Meana (2010) noted that some women have reported that it is highly desirable and arousing for them to feel desired by their partner. Interestingly, sexual desire may therefore also include the desire to be desired in some cases. This is in line with Van Anders et al.'s (2011) argument that intimacy is both sexual and nurturing, and that desire has multiple components. It is, however, more engaging to understand why sexual desire is multidimensional for most women. Tiefer, Hall and Tavri (2002) were of the opinion that women receive broader socialisation than men regarding their sexuality, and this influences the complexity of understanding their sexual desire. The argument that women's socialisation processes could influence their expression of sexual desire does not imply that women's sexual desire is characterised by anything other than sexual components but rather that the socially constructed expectation of 'nurturing intimacy' and 'power relations' are aspects to be considered in the understanding of sexual desire. Also, the argument in this section has been about how women's sexual desire is shaped; it is therefore also important to state that various scholars have noted that what men desire may also not be sexual alone and may include power and nurturance as well (Van Anders and Goldey 2010; Edelstein et al. 2011; Van Anders 2012).

Sexual desire is fundamental for experiences of intimacy and satisfaction in a relationship. In fact, it is the foundational process that is usually required to initiate sexual experiences within relationships. The question of intimacy therefore becomes very important. The next section

examines the nature of intimacy in intimate relationships and its influence on relationship satisfaction.

2.5.2 Intimacy, relationship satisfaction, and sexuality

The number of social sciences studies of relationship intimacy in Africa has grown over the past few decades. In that light, the current body of literature on relationship intimacy requires much refinement of meanings and concepts. Questions such as ‘What is the appropriate definition of intimacy?’ therefore persist. This is partly because the experience of ‘intimacy’ can be very subjective. The definitions of intimacy across various literature conceptualise it as multidimensional, and spanning through the experience of love, emotional disclosure, and sexuality in general (Patrick et al. 2007; Mitchell et al. 2008). Interestingly, Helm (2010) argued that intimacy is not restricted to the confines of sexual relationships alone, as it may also exist in non-sexual relationships such as friendships. Across various texts, intimacy is defined as a simple, multidimensional, and even complex experience within intimate relationships and friendships (Patrick et al. 2007; Mitchell et al. 2008). However, for this study, the focus is on intimacy within heterosexual romantic relationships.

Prager’s (1995) conceptualisation of intimacy as multi-componential is very relevant in this discussion. Prager (1995) believed that the experience of intimacy could be both behavioural and emotional. He identified that people could be intimate through the activities they perform with their partner, such as touching and sharing time together, which is the behavioural component. Secondly, Prager (1995) argued that the emotional component is usually a follow-up on sexual desire and attraction. Emotional intimacy is very psychological, and builds on the feelings and desires people have.

In general, there is consensus in the literature that intimacy is related to sexual satisfaction and sexuality. However, some authors have argued that the emotional aspect of intimacy is the most relevant to relationship satisfaction (Bloch, Haase and Levenson 2014; Yoo et al. 2014). These authors argued that feeling loved, cherished, and important to one’s partner is very important for relationship satisfaction and stability for both men and women. Nevertheless, this study is of the position that the relationship between the emotional and behavioural components of intimacy is often intertwined and not very clear. It might be very difficult to distinguish between an emotional experience and a behavioural one when in most cases they are experienced simultaneously. Most times, what people feel influences the way they act, and this

is very particular to how women in this study explained their use of traditional aphrodisiacs (Bloch et al. 2014).

2.5.2.1 The influence of intimacy on relationship satisfaction

Flowing from the above, it is important to understand the meaning of relationship satisfaction before examining its connection to intimacy. Most literature within this area of research defines relationship satisfaction in relation to the perceived level of pleasure or displeasure derived from sexual intercourse/activities in a relationship (Byers 2005; Yeh et al. 2006; Butzer and Campbell 2008; Kisler and Christopher 2008). Sexual satisfaction is therefore strongly correlated with relationship satisfaction. However, in line with Haynes et al. (1992), I argue that relationship satisfaction goes beyond sexual satisfaction to include other aspects such as communication, affection, and love.

Psychological questionnaires such as the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale are frequently used to assess relationship satisfaction (Avci and Kumcagiz 2011). These scales use measures such as the extent of agreement between partners on various issues, commitment, and benefit from relationships, among others, to estimate the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction in a relationship. While these scales are widely used in socio-psychological studies, they might not necessarily pay attention to the interpretation's subjective realities and salient descriptions of 'relationship satisfaction' that emanate from the process of qualitative interviewing. This study fills this gap by investigating through a qualitative lens women's experience of relationship satisfaction. I argue that relationship satisfaction means different things for different people. The criteria for assessing relationship satisfaction are very subjective and not the same for everyone. In addition, it is often influenced by context and the experiences of the assessor.

The normative assertion that intimacy is usually sexual has made several authors argue that sexual performance impacts positively on relationship satisfaction (Heiman et al. 2011; Smith et al. 2012). However, not many studies pay attention to the fact that sexual drive reduces with ageing; hence, how do we account for relationship satisfaction among couples in a long-term relationship? Interestingly, Del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes, Santos-Iglesias and Sierra (2014) argued that intimacy must be conceived beyond sexual relations as it is in understanding these dynamics that one appreciates how other forms of intimacy (behavioural, communication) influence overall relationship satisfaction. These other forms of intimacy also overlap and are

interconnected. Considering these connections, intimacy and relationship satisfaction are not as direct or as simple as presented in most studies. In reality, various types of intimacy differ in their level of importance to relationship satisfaction. Other authors have identified other forms of intimacy as verbal, effective, and physical intimacy (Del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes et al. 2014). Verbal intimacy is the level of communication and self-disclosure that is obtainable in a relationship; effective intimacy deals with the partner's subjective perception of closeness and emotional bonding, while physical intimacy is sexual desire or attraction (Del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes et al. 2014).

Satisfying a partner's sexual desire(s) and ensuring intimacy are both crucial for relationship satisfaction. While these factors are not sole determinants of overall relationship satisfaction, their roles have been discussed as significant in the literature (Stephenson and Meston 2010; Metz and McCarthy 2011). The effects of relationship dissatisfaction are usually very threatening to a relationship; it leads to cases of infidelity and in some cases relationship dissolution. In the next section, I discuss the role of infidelity in the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women in intimate relationships in Nigeria.

2.6 INFIDELITY, EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIRS, AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

This section begins by providing scholarly definitions of basic terms such as infidelity and extramarital affairs, as well as a critical discussion of how they have been debated in the literature.

Infidelity is commonly defined in the literature as violating the sexual commitment and loyalty of one or both partners in an intimate relationship. Infidelity is usually seen as extradyadic sex within monogamous relationships; an emotional, sexual, or romantic involvement that infringes on the norms and values that guide both the emotional and physical intimacy of people in a committed relationship (Glass and Staeheli 2002; Mark, Janssen and Milhausen 2011; Zare 2011). Glass (2007) defined infidelity as the negation of the norms and principles that guide a relationship that could result in sexual or emotional impact because of jealousy or rivalry. Other synonyms used for infidelity include cheating, adultery, swinging, casually flirting, or having a conversation with explicit sexual intentions with another person aside from one's partner and sexual exchanges with no romantic involvement.

Glass (2007) further highlighted some conditions that influence relationship infidelity to include, firstly, dissatisfaction with an aspect (minor or major) of a relationship. This could happen in both unhappy/unloving and happy relationships. Secondly, when partners desire new adventure in their sexual relationship and their partner is unwilling or unyielding to explore this new sexual desire(s). Thirdly, when a partner is cheating, they are usually not interested in sex within the relationship. These narratives aid the understanding of the assumption that an unfaithful spouse is not getting enough (love, romance, happiness, and commitment) in their relationship; they thus seek to fill this void from outside, and meanwhile might also not be giving enough in their relationship. Building on the points raised, Brown (2013) argued that infidelity in committed relationships is often built on secrecy, emotional intimacy, and sexual chemistry, even if they have not been physically involved with their new partner. Based on this definition, infidelity is not just sexual but could be emotional as well.

Ojedokun (2015) argued that while the phenomenon that men take up a second wife is becoming less attractive in Nigeria, marital infidelity has resurfaced in other forms such as ‘Aristos³’, ‘sugar daddies’, and ‘baby mamas’. This has resulted in the fragmentation of fathering and mothering responsibilities, which has increased the number of parents who are not in any legal unions (Idoko 2018). Interestingly, this is more common among men, as several men engage in sexual relationships with young women. When these women fall pregnant, they are usually called ‘baby mamas’. While the forms and approaches are changing, secrecy is still held in high esteem as most of these relationships and affairs are kept away from the public or anyone that knows of their ‘legal’ relationship.

Blow and Hartnett (2005) and Schmitt (2003) argued that infidelity is more prevalent among men irrespective of whether it is defined as ‘wanting to’, ‘doing’, or ‘having done’. Remarkably, some other scholars have argued that if infidelity is defined as extending beyond sexual intercourse, then there are no significant differences between men and women (Allen et al. 2005; Barta and Kiene 2005; Burdette et al. 2007).

Various reasons have been debated in the literature as influencing relationship infidelity. Some authors have noted that infidelity or having multiple sexual partners is part of the normative definition of masculinity; men use their resources and power to attract and claim several partners and marry many wives in cultures where polygyny is common (Schippers 2007;

³ Aristos is a popular media term that is used to describe a phenomenon where a young woman is in a sexual relationship with a much older man, usually for financial support. It is a term that has become very popular in literature that examines the sexual relationships of undergraduate female university students in Nigeria.

Lammers et al. 2011; Macia, Maharaj and Gresh 2011; Adinkrah 2012). While men are concerned with displaying power and believe that having multiple sexual partners is part of their masculinity, scholars argue that women emphasise 'quality', judged on reproductive fitness and are less concerned with appearance but more with the status and resources of their male partner (Blow and Hartnett 2005). Apart from the fact that this belief allows men to leverage their higher economic and social status to entice women, it also shows that women's infidelity is not as casual. Most women are opposed to casual sex and prefer relationships with emotional attachments, even in cases of infidelity (Mapfumo 2016).

Moreover, infidelity is influenced by both personal and contextual factors. These factors include the quality of the relationship, personal values, the level of sexual desire and gratification, and the availability of sexual opportunities (Bloo and Hartnett 2005; Smith 2007, 2010). While infidelity could be the cause of relationship dissatisfaction, it could also be a consequence of relationship problems. Drenfeldt (2013) noted that a less common factor in the debate on relationship infidelity is poverty and a need to satisfy basic socio-economic needs such as food and shelter. Even though most cases of infidelity are emotional and sexual, some cases of partners engaging in extra-relationship affairs have also been said to be money driven.

Discussing the changing nature of marriage as an institution of the family, Olayemi (2012) noted that in contemporary Nigeria, marriage as a highly cherished part of the family institution is becoming less attractive because of the increasing rate of marital infidelity. The repercussion of this is that married women, in particular, live in fear that their partner is engaging in extramarital affairs. Ojedokun (2015) noted that in an era where social norms are failing to curtail extramarital infidelity, partners must turn to legal avenues to hold spouses accountable.

Infidelity is generally disapproved of and frowned upon across most cultures in Nigeria; however, some individuals secretly condone and participate in it. Meanwhile, the repercussions of infidelity lead to and deepen dissatisfaction in intimate relationships (Ojedokun 2015). This dissatisfaction is not in reference to consensual relationships. As more couples seek divorces for varying reasons, others who feel they are socially, religiously, or culturally obliged to remain married, seek out various opportunities and avenues to maintain the fidelity of their spouses. In cases of infidelity, it is usually argued that members of the primary relationship suffer because resources that are meant to be directed to them are shared with the extramarital partner (Smith 2009; Smith 2010).

Studies reveal that several women rely on various traditional aphrodisiacs and sexual practices to maintain their man's fidelity. For instance, Scorgie et al. (2009) and Scorgie et al. (2011) argued that beyond the search for sexual pleasure, women in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, among others, adopt various vaginal practices to ensure the fidelity of their spouses. In addition, Chime (2009) argued that the need to ensure men's fidelity is one of the factors that influences women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Northern Nigeria. This literature provided empirical insight into investigating the notion that one of the reasons for the use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women is to ensure men's fidelity. In the next section, I critically discuss the theoretical grounding of this study. I draw on salient arguments from African feminist models to argue that women's claim of agency, power, and importance within the familial terrain is often achieved through salient and unpopular approaches and I examine whether these measures really give women the agentic power they desire.

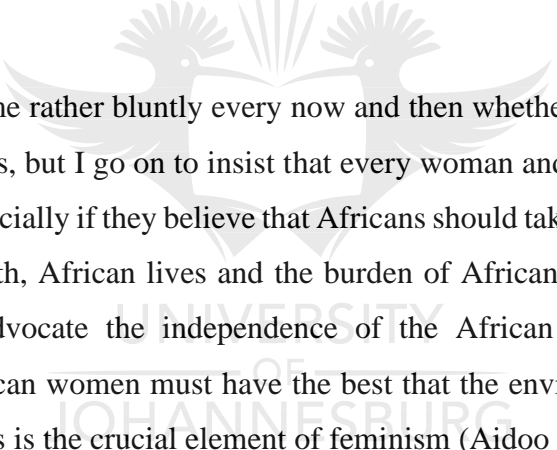
2.7 FEMINISM AND AFRICAN REALITIES: EXPLORING WOMEN'S NARRATIVES ON EMANCIPATION AND LIBERATION IN AFRICA

This section discusses two main theoretical perspectives: African feminism and the social exchange theory. As enunciated earlier in this chapter, the narratives regarding the use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Nigeria emerge from a complex socio-cultural terrain that influences the sexual and family experiences of the women who use them. These theories provide a knowledge frame to understand how practices, mores, norms, and values shape the lives of women across various cultures in Africa. Also, a detailed engagement of theoretical arguments to understand how the use of traditional aphrodisiacs and their recent sporadic popularity reflect narratives beyond sexual enhancement is provided. I also present various mediums through which women adopt socio-cultural practices for emancipation, empowerment, and claiming agency. These practices reflect different conceptualisations of agency that I will further expand on and discuss in the analysis chapter of this thesis.

There is usually a deep-seated debate about what African feminism encompasses and who should be called an African feminist (Ahikire 2014). Some of these arguments are related to the terrain, arguments, and the preoccupation of African feminism as a theoretical lens for understanding women's experiences. African feminism is feminism championed by African women to specifically address the needs and challenges of women on the continent (Mekgwe 2008). This is feminism positioned as an epistemological strand and a vibrant movement that validates the experience of women of Africa (Goredema 2010). The arguments of African

feminism are described as providing a discernible difference between women who were colonised and their perceived colonisers; it is a movement that brings to global attention the influence of history, present realities, and future expectations on the life of women across Africa.

These theorisations about women of Africa are interdisciplinary, as well as not confined to the geographical space of only women living in Africa, but also about the realities of women of African descent who live in the diaspora (Ahikire 2014). Some of the great contributors to the literature on African feminism are based outside Africa. Furthermore, most of the debates, practices, and policy implementations advanced by African feminism are generally pursued on the African continent (Ahikire 2014). Hence, the terrain of African feminism is more than just geography; even if many of its arguments are about the experience of women in Africa. Aidoo (1998: 39) argued that the preoccupation of African feminism is not just about women's liberation and emancipation but also about the overall development of the African continent. She further mentioned:



When people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist – especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives and the burden of African development. It is not possible to advocate the independence of the African continent without believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us, this is the crucial element of feminism (Aidoo 1998: 39).

The argument above is based on the notion that women's emancipation will lead to the transformation of Africa and the subsequent development of the continent. It is usually very difficult to define African feminism because of its variations, but the major assertion of African feminism as explained thus far is that the experiences of women are not universal and women across Africa, in particular, are shaped by different factors (socio-cultural, historical slavery, and colonialism, among others) that are contextual and influenced by their socio-historical background.

For African feminists, feminism is highly influenced by different political eras across the history of the continent. Such political dispensations could be classified in the broad spectrum of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial African experiences (Goredema 2010). These vital

historical reference points across regions of Africa were never experienced at the same time, nor were their experiences similar across the board. This implies that factors that influence the development of feminism differ across African regions mainly because the socio-political experiences that shape feminist ideas across the continent were very dissimilar. Just like there are various approaches to conceptualising gender issues across Africa, it is impossible to assume a homogenous feminist narrative in Africa. The relativity of social realities on the African continent has a prolonged influence on the conception of feminism and as such necessitates the pluralistic narrative of women's experiences in Africa. African feminism therefore unravels the contextual meaning of gender relations across varying cultures and highlights the challenges women face within these cultures (Mekgwe 2008).

To avoid complications because of the variety of African feminisms, Goredema (2010: 35) highlighted some specific categories that provide a good understanding of the difference between African and Western feminism. Some of the differentiating categories are built on strong cultural and traditional elements, peculiar socio-economic and socio-political issues, prevailing racial and gender dynamics, and peculiar issues around the conceptualisation of sex and sexuality. These fundamental categories form the epistemological foundation on which the tenets of African feminisms are built. This study draws on major arguments of African feminisms in general and WAF in particular.

Feminism discourses are increasingly becoming epistemologically decentralised as they have become more essential to examine the dynamics, complexities, and diversities in the experiences of women across the globe. It is important to highlight that African feminism is not an anti-Western ideology but a knowledge system that emphasises how material peculiarities, culture, and history have shaped the experiences of women across the African continent (Mekgwe 2008). Some of these great conceptualisations within the terrain of African feminism includes 'Ogunyemi's concept of African womanism, which she developed at almost the same time as and without knowledge of Alice Walker's womanism; Mary Kolawole's womanism; Molar Ogundipe-Leslie's stiwanism (acronym Transformations Including Women in Africa); and Nnaemeka's nego-feminism' (Arndt 2002: 32).

African feminism as described thus far is a critique of knowledge systems that put Western feminist narratives at the forefront of the feminist agenda (Ntseane 2011). Like other types of feminisms, it further reiterates the plurality of feminism as derived from the varying and dynamic experiences of women across the globe. It brings to the fore the experiences of African

women and advances unique contextually driven processes to transform gender relationships within cultures in Africa. The approaches advanced vary, but the common agenda across the board is to ensure that emancipation and social justice are attained by women on the continent.

Making sense of African feminism involves complications and requires negotiation between several discourses and social-relational categories. In the words of Goredema (2010: 36), negotiation between these discourses can result in a 'double-edged sword'. The need to establish a distinct path between gender relation processes before and during colonialism makes African feminism/feminists want to detach its narratives from issues relating to colonialism, race, class, etc., but at the same time the fundamental reason for African feminist advocacy is based on the reaffirmation of claims that these issues (colonialism, race, class) have strong influences on the experiences of women in Africa (Mekgwe 2008; Goredema 2010; Ntseane 2011).

For instance, Oyewunmi (1997) argued that in precolonial Africa, gender was not an important relational category among the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria. Instead, age or seniority formed the basis on which people were assigned responsibilities and respect was accorded. Across various societies in precolonial Africa, women leaders existed within various spheres of life – from the economy to politics and the military. Weir (2007: 9) noted that in South Africa, 'Zulu royal women demonstrated such leadership before, during and after King Shaka's reign and this took a variety of forms ... Sometimes military, but more often economic and religious ... including rainmaking, administering ritual medicine and custodianship of sacred objects.'

Narratives such as these, showing the roles some women played in some African cultures before colonialism, support the imagery of the strong, black, selfless African woman. While there is nothing like an African woman since the experiences of women across regions and cultures on the continent are divergent, the term is, however, used here to emphasise the important roles some women occupied within various cultures in Africa. Hence, there have been arguments that encourage the reimagination of the ideal state of African societies where authentic traditional practices have not been watered down by modernity or influenced by colonialism (Ngugi 2001; Spear 2003). However, caution must be exercised not to assume that these precolonial societies were devoid of diversity and complex gender relation processes.

Pre- or postcolonialism, the multi-layered nature of identity construction within most of these African societies is complex and requires negotiation across identities such as tribe, ethnicity,

and religion. These complexities are important for consideration in the discussion of precolonial African societies so as not to assume a perfect society. Also, while some scholars have argued that women across Africa were not the most oppressed in the world before colonialism and challenged notions that they were not part of the socio-economic, political, and religious life of their societies, Ogbomo and Ogbomo (1995: 431) argued that ‘practices such as circumcision, widowhood, and centralization of political authority worked in favour of patriarchal oppression of the female folk’.

Critics of feminism generally and African feminism from within Africa have always seen the word ‘feminist’ as connoting negative ideas that suggest a movement against men. There is usually a backlash against women across Africa who identify as feminists; they are perceived as rude, arrogant, disrespectful, and disregarding cultural imperatives (Dryden et al. 2002; Swirsky and Angelone 2014). This has made various feminist activists face criticism across Africa. Aidoo (1982: 41), in one of her texts, emphatically stated that she would not protest if called a feminist because she was aware of the narratives that underlie the word ‘feminist’ within the African context and that these perceptions differ greatly.

The word ‘feminist’ is widely used to describe persons who believe in the emancipation of women and the promotion of an egalitarian society where all rights are respected as equal for all humans. Aidoo’s (1982) statement further substantiates the aforementioned argument that the notions associated with feminism across Africa differ tremendously. It is therefore important to understand feminism contextually because there is no universal experience of womanhood. Women’s concerns differ across place and time. Feminist discourse across Africa is quite complex and complicated and portrays various forms of negotiation in the quest for women’s emancipation (Mekgwe 2010; Atanga 2013). This negotiation, according to Goredema (2010: 38), is ‘a dual existence of Western knowledge and values together with African authenticity and cultural value, a world where feminism is un-African because it is not part of African culture’.

Moreover, criticisms of Western feminism are more nuanced. Most of this criticism is targeted at unsettling the Western feminist hegemonic hold on the experiences of women and the guise that the experiences of women from the West might be representative of what other women are going through across the globe. This is essentially a challenge of universalism in the conceptualisation, theorisation, and engagement of women’s experiences. Mohanty’s 1988 essay sparked debate on the importance of universalism and particularity in feminist discourse.

She analysed the Eurocentric domination of feminist discourse and argued against the representation of the Third World from an oppressive point of view. She noted that the third world is not just a site of oppression but reflects historical complexities that need to be engaged and theorised.

Some of the criticisms of Western feminism are its universalisation of the experiences of women and the approaches to understanding those experiences (Mohanty 1988). In addition, Korieh (2005: 111) argued that Western feminism is largely critiqued because it has been positioned as 'arbiters of cultural values and meanings' when it comes to the experiences of women. Furthermore, Mohanty (1988) argued for a cross-cultural feminist work that is sensitive to the micro-politics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as macro-politics of global and political systems and processes. Her approach is one that will be multi-layered and will advance the relationship(s) between the particular and the universal without trivialising the particular or overgeneralising the universal. This common feminist project will be based on recognising solidarity and common values. The emergence of diverse strands of feminism basically highlights the significance of the diverse experiences of women across varying localities as against a universal narrative (Mohanty 2003).

On the other hand, Mojab (1998) believed that particularism in feminist theorisations is a disservice to the emancipation of women. She argued that overemphasising local uniqueness as dominant in emerging feminist models has opened up a great divide among women. It has threatened solidarity and the possibility of having a synergised force that addresses gender inequality. Some of these divides are an ethnic, religious, cultural, and nationalist bonds. Across Africa, Asia, and North America, feminist models continue to spring up because of the need to consider historical exigencies, cultural peculiarities, and contextual essences in the understanding, theorisation, and engagement of women's experiences. Most scholars have argued that the multiplicity of feminist theorisation as popularised in the 21st century is not anti-Western feminism. Nevertheless, it has become important that the dynamism and plurality of experiences be recognised in feminist debates. The arguments I presented above do not aim to promote difference but to advance a possibility for cross-national feminist solidarity that will appreciate common values.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1997) provided a succinct description of what African feminism must entail from a womanist point of view. She argued that an African womanist must deal with 'interethnic skirmishes and cleansing, religious fundamentalism, the language issue,

gerontocracy and in-lawism' (Ogundipe-Leslie 1997: 4). She argued that it is important to consider the socio-historical, cultural, and religious issues that shape the experiences of women in Africa in this conceptualisation. For Africa, she argued that some prevailing social issues such as poverty, older women oppressing younger women, women oppressing co-wives within polygynous unions, and/or men oppressing their spouses all have a unique way of affecting women's lives.

Her arguments are drawn from her study of the Yoruba cultural group in Nigeria. While her unit of analysis was the Nigerian precolonial society, she consistently referred to other cultures within Africa to highlight the social, economic, and spiritual role women play in the survival of society. Women are therefore not just mothers; they are nurturers of society and a spiritual being that represents fruitfulness within most precolonial African cultures. Women are transcendental beings with powerful intellectual, emotional, and spiritual resources that constitute a very important cultural capital for the African society (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994).

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) further argued that women's identity cannot be fully comprehended through a narrow prism. She described trying to understand a woman's experience from this narrow prism as a 'dichotomous' framework that neglects all the possible statuses a woman could acquire within a cultural context – apart from being a wife in marriage and a mother in the home. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 210) asserted that

[a]ll theoreticians of African liberation have failed to confront the issue of gender within the family or to confront the family as a site for social transformation. They will talk about changing society, mobilizing Africa, but not about the issue of the relation of men to women-gender relations. With modernization of Africa, however, in my view, there has to be a new re-ordering of society, particularly at the level of family because of erosions and changes within the traditional family stemming from new developments which has to be interrogated.

In the pursuit of transformation across Africa, gender must be paid crucial attention similar to race, class, and culture (Ezenwa-Ohaeto 2015). Addressing gender issues and uplifting women will amount to the transformation of African societies. The study of women's experiences will therefore require a nuanced analytical tool that will enable feminist reconstruction and transformation of family patterns and society (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). This does not suggest a homogenous description of women across Africa; but rather a part of a larger African feminist

project that recognises the cultural significance and plurality of experience in the theorisation of womanhood.

The discussion above critically explored African feminism. It discussed how women's emancipation and liberation in Africa have been engaged theoretically over the years and locates sexual agency as a seat of power for women in Northern Nigeria, claimed through sexual negotiation. In the next section I provide a critical reflection on how sexuality has been engaged by some African feminists.

2.7.1 Critical reflections on African feminist studies on sexuality

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, sexuality is a very fundamental part of humans. Caldwell, Caldwell and Quiggin's (1989) study on the social context of Aids in sub-Saharan Africa opened up critical debates and reflections that have since challenged problematic narratives of sexuality across various cultural groups in Africa. Caldwell et al. (1989) attempted to provide an explanation of the nature of sexual behaviour and systems of sexuality in relation to the prevalence of Aids in sub-Saharan Africa. They argued that sexual activities in sub-Saharan Africa were not subjected to moral and religious regulations as obtainable in the West. Interestingly, they studied and analysed African sexuality by adopting a narrow prism in their analysis of the influence of Christianisation and secularisation on the African people. Caldwell et al. (1989) therefore advanced a model of permissive African sexuality; a moral, cultural, and religious system that does not regulate sexual activities. The description of African sexuality, or more specifically the sexuality of the people of sub-Saharan Africa as permissive and unregulated, has since been challenged from diverse quarters.

Ahlberg (1994) critiqued the notion of permissive African sexuality as advanced by Caldwell et al. (1989) by contesting their description of morality in the regularisation of sexuality in Africa. Ahlberg (1994) noted that Caldwell et al.'s (1989) assumption that there is a single sexuality narrative for Africa is itself flawed considering the very diverse nature of the continent's ethnic and cultural groups. In the same light, Le Blanc, Meintel and Piché (1991) noted in their response to Caldwell et al. (1989) that evidence shows that there is a wide range of sexual patterns in sub-Saharan Africa; hence, there is no distinct African sexuality. In the exploration of African sexuality it will therefore be essential to bring into context forces such as slavery, colonialism, and urbanisation, among others, that had (re)shaped social systems

across Africa. Bringing in these factors to the discourse of African sexuality will highlight variance and dynamism in the conceptualisation of sexuality across Africa.

Also, the process of modernisation in Africa did many things; part of which was the transfer of knowledge and expertise with the hope of solving Africa's problems without due consideration/recognition of indigenous approaches or initiatives. According to Ahlberg (1994: 225), the challenge with this style of modernisation was that 'local people were ignored; their initiative is suppressed, and their support is demobilized'. A process that ignored indigenous approaches and suppressed their initiatives must have impacted social systems directly or indirectly; it is therefore important to account for these changes and influencing factors in the study of Africa's social systems. Ahlberg (1994) concluded that challenges arise when sexuality in Africa is examined through the lens of foreign moral formulations. Attention must be paid to contextual peculiarities and historical changes, and complexities must be highlighted.

Epprecht (2011) noted in the article titled 'New perspective on sexualities in Africa' that the urgent need to contribute to the epidemiological discourse on HIV/Aids made several researchers reinforce the erroneous notions of a single 'African sexuality' and the un-Africanness of various sexual orientations. Also, simplified assumptions and victimisation of various sexual practices across cultural groups were popularised. Epprecht (2011) therefore argued for a need to challenge widespread assumptions, blind spots, and essentialisms about sexuality in Africa. Scholars who research sexuality and sexual practices must 'unravel complex motivations and struggles, and forms of empowerment within historical and cultural circumstances that had hitherto remained unexplored' (Epprecht 2011: 3). Researching sexuality in Africa therefore requires that the researcher shed light on the complexities and dynamism, as well as the protean nature, of sexuality. What is considered normative sexual practices need to be critiqued and challenged; as Epprecht (2011) put it, normal is frequently sustained by rigorous denial, secrecy, and misrepresentation to maintain or (re)produced a narrative.

Flowing from the above, it is important to note that sexuality is complex and multidimensional (Tamele 2006). According to Tamale (2006), sexuality is intrinsically linked to all aspects of human life and connects with power and political discourses. Osha (2004) also described sexuality as the new form of religion that permeates every sphere of society and is ably supported by the media and the marketisation of sex as the need to critique overgeneralised

assumptions about African sexualities becomes more popular, or what Tamale (2006: 89) described as challenging the serious misrepresentation of African sexuality, especially women's sexuality, as 'profligate and hyper-sexual'. Arnfred (2009) argued that the investigation of sexualities by African feminists is relatively new, with two broad strands of research areas prevalent. First is research into sexualities in Africa with a focus on pleasure and power, and creativity and desire. This strand of sexuality research conceptualises sexuality as a form of strength and resistance (see McFadden 2003). Secondly is research that challenges assumptions that present sexuality in Africa, especially women's sexuality, as 'bad', 'filthy', and 'morally corrupting'. Pereira (2003) argued that the conceptualisation of sexualities across Africa from a negative perspective is ahistorical and non-reflective, and therefore needs to be challenged. It is therefore important to reread and reanalyse various cultural practices across Africa.

Whether exploring sexuality as a form of strength and resistance or challenging erroneous colonialist assumptions of African sexualities, what is deducible from the discussion thus far is that sexualities in Africa are complex, dynamic, and have undergone various changes. According to Tamale (2006), pushing sexuality research in Africa beyond the normative borders of reproduction, violence, and diseases to exploring other areas such as desire and pleasure will open up new conversations and enhance deeper insight into the complexities of the subject. She also noted that sexuality must be constructed outside the usual frameworks of rights, legislation, and behaviour as these can be limiting (Tamale 2008). Sexuality research must therefore be more critical and pay attention to various socio-cultural and historical exigencies. Interestingly, this research examined a sexual practice predominant among women in Northern Nigeria that draws on pleasure as a form of empowerment for women in intimate relationships.

2.7.2 Reflection on women's empowerment: Complementarity, negotiation, and compromise

Nnaemeka's (2004) nego-feminism and Adimorah-Ezeigbo's (2012) snail-sense feminism are models of African feminism that carefully explain how women draw on principles of complementarity, negotiation, and compromise, among others, to achieve empowerment. Nnaemeka's (2004) nego-feminism argues that complementarity and communality are important for the maintenance of social systems and social life in Africa and are therefore also

important tools for the emancipation of women. Nnaemeka (2004: 376) identified the following important indigenous proverbs as epistemic foundations for her arguments:

When something stands, something stands beside it. – Igbo proverb

A person is a person because of other people! – Sotho proverb

One head cannot go into counsel. – Ashanti proverb

The sky is vast enough for all birds to fly without colliding. — Yoruba proverb

Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities ... In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a “proper”. – Michel de Certeau (1984: 117).

These proverbs span through regions of Africa and all give credence to the idea that communality is very significant to Africa’s social life. The ‘self’ and ‘individual’ are all identity categories that are only conceivable within the existence of a group. As such, the experiences of women cannot be fully comprehended and understood without examining the groups to which they belong and, in the same way, there cannot be social emancipation for women without developing strategies that will not only seek to liberate women but will be cognisant of other members of their social system. This communal social system as described above is dominant across most cultures in Africa. It consists of an interplay of resistances and realisations, culture, history, colonialism, and slavery, among others. Nego-feminism is the feminism of negotiation built on cultural imperatives and influenced by the dynamism of local and global exigencies (Nnaemeka 2004).

The major principles that guide this model are negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance (Nnaemeka 2004: 378). For the emancipation of women across Africa to become a reality and to gain popular support, feminists must negotiate and sometimes compromise to reach their goal. In the same manner, Adimora-Ezeigbo (2012) argued that the principle of shared value has endured in various African cultures and should be applied to contemporary gender analysis and, importantly, to women’s emancipation. Akanmode (2015) noted that Nnaemekas’s (2004) ‘negotiation’ and Adimorah-Ezeigbo’s (2012) ‘shared values’ are very similar important principles that advance the same approach for the emancipation of Nigerian women. Specifically, snail-sense feminism highlights the need for women to accommodate and cooperate with men for inclusive gender reformation. It is an approach that advocates for

peaceful negotiation of patriarchal spaces for women's empowerment through non-aggressive relational processes between men and women (Akanmode 2015).

Adimora-Ezeigbo (2012) noted that the strategies of the snail are an age-old practice that guided the relationships between men and women in Eastern Nigeria. She argued:

Women in our cultures – from different parts of Nigeria – often adopt a conciliatory or cooperative attitude towards men. This is akin to what the snail does with the environment in which it moves and exists. The snail crawls over boulders, rocks, thorns, crags and rough terrains smoothly and efficiently with well-lubricated tongue, which is not damaged or destroyed by these harsh objects.

... The snail carries its house on its back without feeling the strain. It goes wherever it wishes in this manner and arrives at its destination intact. If danger looms, it withdraws into its shell and is safe. This is what women often do in our society to survive in Nigeria's harsh patriarchal culture. It is this tendency to accommodate or tolerate the male and cooperate with men that informs this theory, which I call snail-sense feminism (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2012: 27).

In line with this wisdom is driven gender relation processes. Nnaemeka (2004: 378) argued further that African feminists must know 'when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts'.

This implies that nego-feminism advocates for the principle of negotiation to unsettle patriarchy and achieve the goal of women's empowerment. Hence, for some African women, feminism is an act that requires subtleness, wisdom, and dynamism as against stability and reification of a construct. Furthermore, Nnaemeka (2004) argued that feminism has always been part of how some African women organise themselves, but the way and manner through which women in Africa have remained relevant within highly patriarchal societies differ from the conventional and Western style.

Negotiation and compromise at the level of language and gender are reflections of Africa's cultural imperatives. Nnaemeka (2004: 379) cited Steady (1987: 8) as follows:

African patterns of feminism can be seen as having developed within a context that views human life from a total, rather than a dichotomous and exclusive, perspective. For women, the male is not "the other" but part of the human same. Each gender constitutes the critical half that makes the human whole. Neither sex is totally complete in itself. Each has and needs a compliment, despite the possession of unique features of its own.

The willingness and readiness of some of these African women to negotiate and compromise even in a difficult situation with men and unfavourable social systems are common values that are shared across cultures. Men are thus not seen as an enemy but as an important member of the social system. In Nnaemeka's (2004) thought and analysis, some of these African women as described above portray a functionalist view of society where they believe all social elements are important for the survival of society and, as such, they are inclined to reach out and work with men in the accomplishment of their set goals.

The language of some of these feminist engagements in Africa is therefore founded on the principles of collaboration, compromise, and negotiation. In addition, this negates the Western feminist thought, or more specifically radical feminist thought that engages tools that challenge, disrupt, and deconstruct patriarchal systems. This radical approach of Western feminism is captured in Allen's (1999: 2) narrative where she argued that feminists are interested in 'criticizing, challenging, subverting, and ultimately overturning the multiple axes of stratification affecting women'. On the contrary, WAF models argue that some African women challenge unfavourable social systems through negotiation, accommodation, and compromise.

Despite the similarities between both models, snail-sense feminism highlights individualism, which contrasts the nego-feminism principle of commonality. The argument by snail-sense feminism is that the snail is strong and durable for the challenges it might encounter. In that case, Adimora-Ezeigbo (2012) argued that there is a need first of all for the individual (the woman) to empower herself before she can empower 'others'. 'Others' in this regard are not conceived in an exclusionary way but in recognition of the personalised responsibilities of individuals for complementary group benefit. The liberation and emancipation of women will

therefore require an individualistic approach where all women have to understand that the liberation and empowerment of the self are very crucial for the empowerment of the group. Niyi Osundare has criticised this model to be inefficient for the emancipation of women across Africa because the snail itself in its natural state is weak, slow, and sluggish (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2012). However, in her response to the critique, Adimora-Ezeigbo (2012) argued that the ruggedness, tenacity, and doggedness of the snail in overcoming its challenges irrespective of how intimidating they might be, through the adoption of effective skills and a sensitive attitude, make the attributes of a snail applicable and adaptable for the emancipation of women. Hence, it is not about speed or movement but about the ability of the snail to surmount perceived insurmountable challenges in its natural environment. Likewise, Nigerian women ought to be 'wise, sensitive, and proactive in their quest for justice and self-actualization' (Akanmode 2015: 4).

Different models of WAF identify and discuss principles that are crucial for the empowerment of women in Africa. Some of the arguments of WAF are that women's emancipation across Africa might be very challenging if women see men as their enemies. As such, it is important that on the journey towards empowerment they work together with everyone within society, including men. The emancipation of women should not be at the expense of subjugating and oppressing any other gender or group within society. Hence, principles such as complementarity, compromise, dynamism, and sensitivity should steer the wheel of this desired change.

The common approach advanced by these models is that as women across Africa navigate highly patriarchal spaces, it is important to apply wisdom and caution that do not necessarily position men as enemies but rather common allies in ensuring equitable gender relations. Also, ideas that give a false representation of women and seek to oppress her body need to be critiqued and challenged. In addition, much feminist thought has argued that women's sexual agency should be prioritised as an important part of empowerment (Thege 2009; Kruger, Oakes and Shefer 2015). In the transformation of women's identity, the woman must own her body and have the right to make decisions about sexual and health-related issues regarding her body. Liberation, emancipation, and empowerment will be illusionary if the body of the woman is still subjugated and captured by suppressing notions of culture and patriarchy (Lesch and Kruger 2004). As women's emancipation gains more front on the continent, it is important to understand and put into consideration the dynamism of women's experiences in the theorisation of feminism. The peculiarity of context should influence the approach adopted in

studying challenges that beset women. However, the commonality should be the shared value of non-violent measures in the pursuit of transformation.

This further substantiates the broader objective of African feminism that there is a need to emphasise the experiences of African women in the global discourse of feminism and women's empowerment. It is noteworthy to mention that, as the need for contextually driven experiences of women gains more prevalence, the models and theoretical underpinnings for understanding women's experiences become highly divergent. This plurality is driven by context, culture, and individual experiences and perceptions in most cases.

This notwithstanding, the central argument of the models discussed in this section is that women's liberation across most cultures in Africa is historically situated in prioritising values such as complementarity, negotiation, accommodation, and compromise. These values are often ingrained and observable in salient/hidden practices that have been / are being adopted by women across cultures in Africa over the years. Amidst the discussion of these salient/hidden measures and 'unpopular' approaches used by women to navigate patriarchal terrains is women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs and their influence on women's sexual agency. It is likely that many of the women who use these traditional aphrodisiacs view sex as a tool for negotiation in intimate relationships and as a resource for diverse social, economic, and cultural gains. Considering the relation between sex and negotiation within intimate relationships as explicated in the prevalence of traditional aphrodisiacs in Nigeria, I discuss the social exchange theory to explore the dynamics of sexual exchanges in intimate relationships.

2.8 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY AND THE TRANSACTIONAL NATURE OF SEX IN THE USE OF TRADITIONAL APHRODISIACS

The social exchange theory is an interdisciplinary approach that is very useful in understanding sexual negotiation. The social exchange theory has been used by different authors to explain sexual behaviours and sexuality across Africa. For instance, Luke et al. (2011) adopted the social exchange theory to explain the sexual behaviour of young women engaged in premarital sex in Kenya. West and Krychman (2015) used the social exchange theory to examine how alcohol facilitates sex among young South Africans. The generic principles of this theory span through various disciplines, including sociology (Cook and Emerson 1978), anthropology (Mauss 1954; Levi-Strauss 1969), economics (Ekeh 1974), and social psychology (Thibaut and Kelley 1959; Homans 1961, 1974; Blau 1964). Notwithstanding the disciplinary plurality of

the theory, the social psychology model of social exchange is very applicable to a sexuality discussion because it explicates the importance of exchange between two members of a dyad.

The propositions of the social exchange theory have been applied in studies of choosing a partner, relationship formation, and the prediction of relationship dissolution (Sassler 2010; Skopek, Schulz and Blossfeld 2010; Williams, Sawyer and Wahlstrom 2012). The theory is therefore important in understanding sexuality as negotiated between two people who have a sexual relationship. The social exchange theory likens interaction between individuals to the exchange of goods and services that are intended to meet personal goals (Homans 1958). The condition of exchange therefore reflects the amount of power possessed by a partner in that relationship. The partner who does not depend much on the relationship for personal valued benefits has more bargaining powers to improve their condition of exchange (Van de Rijt and Macy 2006). The resources for negotiation within intimate relationships are dependency and bargaining power, which by implication shows that the less dependent a partner is in a relationship, the more their bargaining power and their ability to shape outcomes within the relationship in their favour (Bittman et al. 2003).

In conceptualising what constitutes a partner's bargaining power, Luke et al. (2011: 2) discussed an individual's employment and earnings (income), the potential benefits of new relationships (real or perceived), and social norms as crucial factors that influence bargaining powers. Susan Sprecher (1998) is one of the foremost researchers that have applied social exchange theory to the study of sexuality. She identified the generic assumptions and common concepts of social exchange theory to include the following (see Table 2.1):

Table 2.1: Assumptions and concepts of the social exchange theory

Assumptions	Concepts
Social behaviour is a series of exchanges	Reward
Individuals attempt to maximise their reward and minimise cost	Cost
When individuals receive reward from others, they feel obliged to reciprocate	Reciprocity

Source: Adapted from Sprecher (1998: 32)

While these assumptions and concepts are regarded as generic for the different types of social exchange theories, the definitions and applications could vary depending on what social issue it is applied to. For instance, in the study of sexuality, the sexual reward is not just the difference between cost and benefit but could be intimacy, love, sexual favours, and money. In addition, the definition of cost and reward within a social context and an intimate relationship could be very complex. There are usually no clearly defined boundaries around what constitutes rewards

and costs in a relationship, with the influence of love and emotion being complex mediating factors. For instance, within a social context where sacrifice and compromise are normative expressions of love and affection, decisions within a relationship might not objectively be based on cost and reward but on a need to safeguard and preserve the relationship, family, or marriage.

2.8.1 Social exchange and women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs: A preliminary application

One of the most important debates of the social exchange theory is the role of sexual satisfaction in the sustenance and survival of intimate relationships. In this light, the social exchange theory specifically examines how partners within a relationship conceptualise, interpret, and assess sexual satisfaction. Some factors become important in assessing these relationship satisfaction dynamics, of which the first is the subjective measure of sexual cost. This is the perceived assessment of the effort and resources committed to sexual intimacy. This assessment of sexual cost is juxtaposed with the subjective measure of sexual rewards.

Reward in this regard is the benefits derived from sexual intercourse. The argument of this model is that partners often compare and contrast if the sexual investment they are committing to a relationship is worth the sexual benefit they derive from such a relationship. Sexual satisfaction is therefore greater if the sexual cost is seen as worth the sexual reward derived from a relationship. However, commitment to a relationship is not only sexual as it includes emotional, social, physical, and material factors.

Another important factor that affects sexual satisfaction is the perceived level of equality within a relationship (Sprecher 1998). This factor speaks to sexual power dynamics / sexual politics within intimate relationships. When both partners equally claim sexual agency within a relationship, the chances that they will be sexually satisfied becomes higher. This is because sex would be consensual, negotiated, and would only occur when both partners consent to the act. Willingness and desire to engage in sexual intercourse greatly influence sexual satisfaction in a relationship. Finally, the overall subjective perception of 'relationship satisfaction' influences sexual satisfaction in a relationship. The more that intimate partners feel their relationship is generally pleasing and desiring, the greater sexual satisfaction they both enjoy. It is important to note that the assessment of relationship satisfaction often takes time and is subjective; it could therefore vary across assessors.

In addition, it is not possible to objectively measure the sexual cost, reward, and perception of equality and relationship satisfaction because of the complex nature of sexuality and the dynamism of sexual behaviours. This model also brings to the fore the fact that sexual satisfaction is not just about coitus and ejaculation but includes factors that are internal and external to the relationship at large. Importantly, the application of the social exchange theory to the study of sexual behaviour / sexuality requires a nuanced understanding that theorises sexuality as dynamic and subjective. This implies that principles such as reward/cost and input/output are not explicitly defined. As argued by Sprecher (1998), relationships often include an investment of resources that are not easily measurable/scaled and cannot be retrieved. They are often linked to individuals' emotional attachment and motivations that cannot be scaled. Moreover, the social exchange theory helps to understand how sex creates exchanges that build intimacy, bonding, and commitment in intimate relationships. In this section, I discuss three types of social exchange models that are applicable to sexuality and sexual behaviour. These theories are the equity model (Walster, Walster and Berscheid 1978), the outcome interdependence model and the investment model (Rusbult 1980; 1983), and the interpersonal model of sexual satisfaction (Lawrence and Byers 1992; 1995).

2.8.2 Equity model

Walster et al. (1978) expanded the works of Homans (1961; 1974), Adams (1965), and Blau (1964) on equity to develop a new version of equity theory that examines sexuality within intimate relationships. This new model of equity is founded on four propositions (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Propositions of the equity model

Propositions	Statement
Proposition 1	Individuals will try to maximise their outcomes (where outcomes equal rewards minus punishments).
Proposition 2	2A: Groups (or rather the individuals comprising these groups) can maximise collective reward by evolving accepted systems for equitably apportioning resources among members. Groups will evolve such systems of equity and will attempt to induce members to accept and adhere to these systems. 2B: Groups will generally reward members who treat others equitably and generally punish members who treat others inequitably.
Proposition 3	When individuals find themselves participating in inequitable relationships, they will become distressed. The more inequitable the relationship, the more distress they will feel.
Proposition 4	Individuals who discover that they are in inequitable relationships will attempt to eliminate their distress by restoring equity. The greater the inequity, the more distress they will feel and the harder they will try to restore equity.

Source: Adapted from Sprecher (1998: 33)

The equity model generally examines the level of balance in a relationship by assessing the disparities between partners' input and outcome. It is important to state that there is a theoretical distinction between equity and equality as research shows that equity and equality (or inequity and inequality) have a high degree of overlap (Cate et al. 1982; Michaels, Edwards and Acock 1984). Hatfield and Traupmann (1981: 166) argued that 'an equitable relationship exists when the person evaluating the relationship, who could be Participant A, Participant B, or an outside observer, concludes that all participants are receiving equal relative gains from the relationship.' Notwithstanding, this is usually complex to determine or ascertain in intimate relationships.

Sprecher (1998) also defined input as a partner's negative or positive contribution to the relationship exchange that makes them entitled to a reward or punishment; the outcome is perceived as the reward or punishment a partner receives in a relationship in congruence with their input, and the total outcome is the rewards minus punishment. From the sequence of relations that could lead to outcomes, two types of inequity are very common, namely under-benefiting inequity and over-benefiting inequity (Sprecher 1998). The perception of equality in a relationship is often dependent on the observer and this judgment could differ from one person to another depending on various factors. Perceptions of equality within a relationship are dependent on how much they value different inputs and outcomes within intimate relationships.

Proposition 3 suggests that men and women who find themselves in unequal relationships feel distressed. Meanwhile, partners who over-benefit are expected to feel less distress but more guilt. Studies have shown that anger is a common emotional reaction associated with the feeling of under-benefiting inequity in a relationship (Sprecher 1986; 1992). This feeling leads to sexual dissatisfaction and intense desire by the under-benefiting partner to pursue equality.

Proposition 4 highlights that this leads the under-benefiting partner to be motivated to restore equality and as such to reduce the feeling of distress. Equality can therefore be achieved by changing or reducing inputs in a relationship in a more contextually applicable manner and offering or reducing certain sexual behaviours. However, involvement in an extra-dyadic relationship may be another way to restore equality. If various measures at restoring equality and reducing distress have been employed and partners still do not feel satisfied, they might take the final option of ending the relationship.

2.8.3 The outcome interdependence theory and the investment model

The outcome interdependence theory focuses on the reward and outcomes a person derives from a relationship. Thibault and Kelley (1959) highlighted common variables in this theory to be reward, cost, comparison level, and comparison level of alternatives. A comparison level is a yardstick with which a person measures their achievements alongside their expectations of a relationship. It is built on the expectations desired of a relationship as set by the evaluating partner. Meanwhile, the comparison level of alternatives refers to the level of reliance or dependence a partner enjoys from a relationship. The evaluating partner compares the outcome of the relationships with what they expect or could accomplish in an alternative relationship. This theory becomes very instrumental in ascertaining how women who use traditional aphrodisiacs evaluate their potency in comparison with their expectation of sexual power and more pleasurable sexual experience. The realisation of previously established expectations of higher negotiation power, influence, and significance within intimate relationships influences their continued investment in these aphrodisiacs. Thibault and Kelley (1959) argued that if present relationship rewards outweigh the perceived outcome in an alternative relationship, the evaluating partner establishes a form of dependence on their current relationship.

Rusbult (1980; 1983) extended Thibault and Kelley's (1959) thought and included investment as a vital component that influences commitment in a relationship. The investment model argues that commitment is measured in a relationship not only by outcome or comparison of alternatives but by investment. Investment, in this case, is defined as resources put into a relationship that cannot be retrieved if the relationship should end (Sprecher 1998). The investment could be in an intrinsic form such as time or self-disclosure, or extrinsic forms such as friends or shared material possessions (Rusbult 1980).

2.8.4 Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS)

While both models discussed earlier in this section focus on how exchanges within the entire process of a relationship affect relationship satisfaction and commitment, the IEMSS as discussed by Lawrence and Byers (1992; 1995) specifically examines sexual exchanges within a relationship and their influences on sexual satisfaction. Important concepts for understanding this model include reward, cost, comparison level, and equality.

According to the IEMSS, some factors influence the perception of being sexually satisfied (Lawrence and Byers 1992). These factors are the perception that sexual satisfaction is greater

than relationship satisfaction; the belief that the sexual reward obtained from a relationship outweighs the cost invested; the belief that the reward from a relationship tallies with the expectations from a comparison level; and the extent to which partners in a relationship feel that sexual rewards are equally shared and mutually beneficial. The IEMSS model emphasises sexual exchange between partners as a very important part of sustaining a relationship. These exchanges help to build intimacy, bond, and commitment. It is therefore important for partners in intimate relationships to equitably commit to their sexual life.

In addition, relationship satisfaction plays a very prominent role in the assessment and understanding of sexual satisfaction as highlighted in the first point discussed above. However, there are many complexities to operationalising and contextualising sexual and relationship satisfaction. The understanding of both concepts (sexual and relationship satisfaction) is fundamental to the application of this model to women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin. Byers (1999) emphasised the complexity of defining sexual and relationship satisfaction because of the very subjective nature of these experiences. However, Lawrence and Byers (1992) earlier described sexual satisfaction as an effective response arising from one's subjective evaluation of the positive and negative dimensions associated with one's sexual relationship. This means that addressing sexual satisfaction does not equal a lack of dissatisfaction but rather a reduced feeling of dissatisfaction. Relationship satisfaction, on the other hand, could be understood from both cognitive and affective points of view (Byers 1999). The cognitive aspect examines whether the cost and rewards in a relationship as experienced match with the expected, while the affective aspect examines the subjective feeling of happiness in a relationship that cannot be scaled/measured.

Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are important concepts in understanding the IEMSS and its relevance to this research. While the historical narrative around the use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Northern Nigeria affirms that it is an age-old practice, this study found it crucial to examine its dynamism and resurgence within contemporary Nigeria. The notion of 'exchange' takes into account the interpersonal context in which sexual activity within a relationship occurs, as well as the level of reward and sexual cost in comparison to the subjective assessment of the perceived level of equality between partners. It raises and addresses important questions around the transactional and negotiated nature of sexual relationships. As highlighted earlier in this thesis, anecdotal evidence suggests that the use of traditional aphrodisiacs has also gained popularity among young unmarried women as it is now regarded as a useful resource for economic and social rewards from men. This theory therefore

provides an appropriate and broadly useful conceptual framework to understand the dynamism (material, intimate, interpersonal) that comes to play in the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among married and unmarried women in Ilorin.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The relationship between women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs and sexual agency/sexuality has not received sufficient sociological attention, nor is it well debated in the empirical literature. In this chapter, I discussed how gender relations within intimate relationships, marriages, and families are changing. I argue that women's empowerment within the 21st century is actually very dynamic, multidimensional, and multifaceted. This is partly because the debate has moved from the global parlance to several micro-contextually driven initiatives.

Interestingly, for women in Nigeria, and Northern Nigeria particularly, the use of various traditional aphrodisiacs popularly known as *kayan mata* has surged for various reasons I discuss later in this thesis. Furthermore, I presented reflections on several African feminist arguments in relation to sexuality, family dynamics, and relationships. WAF thoughts that advance arguments that women across various African cultures historically adopted principles such as negotiation, compromise, complementarity, and shared values, among others, were critically explored. These models were presented as a framework to examine whether women's use of various traditional aphrodisiacs for sexual stimulation reflect salient/hidden measures adopted by some women to navigate patriarchal terrains in intimate relationships in Nigeria. In addition, the social exchange theory was discussed to understand how sex is used as a tool for negotiation and a resource within intimate relationships.

In the next chapter I provide a detailed discussion of the methods, approaches, and strategies adopted to collect empirical data in this research.

CHAPTER THREE

Adopting a Qualitative Research Design: Epistemology, Site, and Fieldwork

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women has not gained much attention in empirical studies. As such, investigating the influence of traditional aphrodisiacs on sexuality, sexual behaviour, and other aspects of women's lives required a design that is explorative and that gives the researcher an opportunity to understand various aspects of participants' realities. Having a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon required that various open-ended questions that give participants an opportunity to express themselves be asked. Questions such as how traditional aphrodisiacs are believed to affect sexual intimacy, relationship satisfaction, and prospects of (in)fidelity were raised. What motivates use and how traditional aphrodisiacs might improve sexual relationship and the quality of marital bonds were also probed. Some of these questions were raised spontaneously during the process of data collection with the aim of gaining more insight into emerging narratives related to this study. From the outset it seemed evident that the appropriate research design to investigate the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women was one that needed to provide room for understanding subjective realities. Finally, because this study sought to explore, understand, and explain a topic that has not gained much research attention, the use of a qualitative research design was deemed most appropriate.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the justification for the adoption of a qualitative research design in this study. It highlights the merits and demerits associated with this design and explores its contextual relevance to this study. Following is a discussion of the distinct selection of the research location and definite study population. A description of the geographical and socio-cultural milieu of the study site is provided to provide insight into the reason for the selection of Ilorin as the study site. Furthermore, the various methods adopted in this study are explained. Each method used is highlighted and discussed alongside their relevance to the process of the research. A detailed description of the overall data-analysis process follows this discussion. A comprehensive discussion of my positionality as a researcher conducting a study on sexuality in Nigeria is provided. The discussion highlights the ethical issues I battled with in the process of the research and reflects on the choices I made in the

preparatory stage and in the course of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with a reflection on the essential arguments of this methodological chapter.

3.2 DESIGNING THE STUDY

A qualitative research design consists of numerous research strategies that seek to understand how humans perceive social reality. This type of research design captures reality with meaningful details and becomes very useful when examining contemporary social problems using human subjects (Sarantakos 2012). This design is also very useful in describing, generating, and testing a theory in relation to certain social phenomena (Glaser and Strauss 2017). While qualitative research designs have been critiqued for lacking solid methodological generalisability (Flick 2014), proponents of the design have responded by arguing that the preoccupation of qualitative research is not to draw inferences from a large population but to describe a social phenomenon from the perspective of participants and to understand its implications for the relevance of theoretical propositions (Glaser and Strauss 2017). Furthermore, Sarantakos (2012) argued that a qualitative research design should be adopted when investigating social issues that are relatively unexplored and lack comprehensive theoretical propositions. It is therefore important to know more about the phenomenon, especially from the perspective of those experiencing it.

This research problematises the use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women in intimate relationships as a phenomenon that is relatively new to the empirical literature; specifically, how and why women use traditional aphrodisiacs and what its implications are for their improved life circumstances, marriages, and agency. Thus, in line with Sarantakos's (2012) argument, the qualitative research design should be used when investigating a social issue that is relatively unexplored and lacks a comprehensive theoretical knowledge frame. Such a study will therefore require a design that does not treat reality as objective and truth as singular but an approach that will explore this phenomenon, understand the circumstances that influence its prevalence, and examine people's subjective evaluations of the use of traditional aphrodisiacs. As per Glaser and Strauss's (2017) definition, the qualitative research design gives an opportunity to understand the subjective nature of reality.

This qualitative study aimed to explore and offer an understanding of the meanings constructed by the participants. The research did not aim to provide the ultimate truth, but rather to investigate the varying nature of how the use of traditional aphrodisiacs is experienced by

women in intimate relationships and the various ways it affects their sexual agency and sexuality. Bowling (2014) defines qualitative research as a multidimensional research method that adopts an investigative and naturalistic approach to social issues. This multidimensional nature allows researchers to gain comprehensive knowledge of the social phenomenon being investigated. To further explicate this multidimensional approach to understanding reality, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) identified certain principles of qualitative research, as discussed below.

The first principle is that truth in qualitative research is divergent and deeply rooted in the narrative of the participants. This is what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) referred to as the holistic nature of qualitative research that has a component of various participants' narratives. In investigating the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women in Ilorin, this research in its preliminary phase did not assume that the motivation for the use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women in Ilorin was similar. As a study immersed in the tenets of qualitative research, it gave an opportunity for every participant to express their perceptions and thoughts on the use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin. To further buttress this point, Sukamolason (2007) argued that the ontological foundation of qualitative research describes truth and reality as multiple and reliant on the experience of research participants. It suffices to say, therefore, that the truth of any genuine qualitative research is as described by the participants.

Fletcher (2017) opined that all qualitative research must endeavour to interpret investigated phenomena in relation to the everyday experiences of people and establish its influence on dominant social structures. It is a point in research where methodology meets method and reality becomes operationalised. Taking cues from this approach to qualitative investigation, I ensured that during the course of the interviews and from the design of the interview schedule (see Annexure C), the participants were asked questions that allowed them to discuss not only their motivation for the use of traditional aphrodisiacs but also to reflect on how it influenced their sexual agency, sexuality, and identity in general. This approach facilitated a process that allowed me to understand how the use of traditional aphrodisiacs is linked with other aspects of women's lives. The inclusion of sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs and some men in the study not only provided an opportunity to triangulate thoughts and narratives, but to also examine how the use of traditional aphrodisiacs is perceived by other members of society. The participants also described how they thought traditional aphrodisiacs affected various social institutions and structures such as the economy, family, and patriarchy.

The second principle discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) is how qualitative research can be used to probe the relationship between systems. Systems in this regard refer to the various aspects of the participants' lives and how these intersect with the observed phenomenon. The reality of most women is one that is wrapped up in the performance of multiple responsibilities. Knowles, Nieuwenhuis and Smit (2009), while examining the lived experiences of female educators in South Africa, highlighted these complex, multiple realities women encounter because of their gender role expectations. The experiences of women are better understood when examined in relation to other aspects of their lives. Hence, for this research, the study was keen on not only reporting the motivation or reasons why married/unmarried women in Ilorin may choose to use traditional aphrodisiacs but also the influence of this choice on their sexual agency, sexual behaviour, sexuality, and perception of multiples femininities within the Ilorin metropolis. It aimed to uncover the narratives around why women use these traditional aphrodisiacs and how they affect notions of power within intimate domains. This research sought to explore the complex narratives around the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women of all adult ages in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, without presenting the findings as absolute truth but as part of the complex narratives around how women's sexuality is constructed and reshaped in contemporary time.

The third principle of a qualitative research design is its preoccupation with understanding a particular social phenomenon without making a prediction. Unlike quantitative research where predictions and generalisations are made, the goal of qualitative research is to understand and interpret the social construction of meaning in a natural setting and apply the ideas generated across contexts through the appreciation of emerging complexities and multiple realities (Suter 2012). Qualitative research does not at any point claim to provide narratives that represent the holistic opinions of women who use traditional aphrodisiacs. Rather, it is context driven and specific.

The fourth principle of qualitative research is that it involves a long commitment of time and expanded resources so as to effectively capture the detailed narratives of participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) highlighted that a qualitative research approach is time consuming, especially during analysis. In the same vein, Anderson (2010: 3) is of the opinion that preparing findings from qualitative research is 'more difficult and time consuming'.

Finally, the fifth principle discussed by Denzel and Lincoln (2005) about the qualitative research design is that it incorporates informed consent decisions and is highly responsive to

ethical concerns. Some of the ethical issues I had to address in this study surfaced from the proposal development and review stage. It included my positionality as a man interrogating the private matter of the sexual behaviour of predominantly married women. It was important to critically distance various biases and parts of my identity that might influence the process and findings of the study. Later in this chapter I provide a detailed discussion of how my positionality as a researcher was handled in the research process. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were very important. It was essential that this research protected the identities of the participants so as not to expose them to risk. As part of the measures taken, informed consent, stating the purpose and aim of the research, was required and explained to the participants before every interview. A very important clause in the document that appealed to most participants was the fact that their identities would not be revealed at any point in the study. Some feared that their partners were not aware that they used traditional aphrodisiacs and might be furious if they discovered they were a party to such. All the participants in this research participated voluntarily.

3.3 REFLECTION ON THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY INFORMING A QUALITATIVE DESIGN

The adoption of qualitative research design in this study was guided by an epistemological philosophy that considers objectivity as constantly unfolding, especially from the perspective of those experiencing it rather than a universal set of explanations or propositions (Marshall and Rossman 2014). This descriptive nature allows a researcher to present a detailed account of the experiences of participants that could either sustain or negate the theoretical propositions on which a study is premised (Glaser and Strauss 2017). Qualitative research therefore allows readers to understand the distinct nature of a problem and how it affects participants in building a narrative of the phenomenon. This study is heuristic since it aimed to bring to the fore new understandings and alternative narratives to examining women's sexual agency and sexuality through the use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. As highlighted in the literature review chapter, even though traditional aphrodisiacs are an age-old practice across the different cultures of the globe, there is a dearth in the literature as to its connection with women's sexual agency and sexuality in intimate relationships. In this regard, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggested certain considerations as important features of truly heuristic research. The researcher must firstly explore all/most aspects of the chosen social problem by using a holistic approach in the search for understanding and new narratives.

Marshall and Rossman (2014) held the position that qualitative research should ideally examine social, historical, and political narratives associated with the phenomenon being investigated. Essentially, it is important to take into consideration how the phenomenon being investigated could be related to other issues within the participants' setting. This requires a holistic approach that will be grounded based on the narratives of participants. Also, heuristic research examines a relationship within a system or culture. In this study, it entailed an examination of the dynamics in the use of traditional aphrodisiacs across different age categories of women – married, unmarried, old, and, young. It also includes understanding the reasons why the use of certain traditional aphrodisiacs among women might be gaining prominence. A heuristic research approach seeks to understand participants' personal experiences. This implies that the conceptualisation of reality within the context of the research should be guided by the experiences shared by the research participants. Marshall and Rossman (2014) explained that this is a subjective process that focuses on participants' perspectives and meanings, which leads to the generation of multiple realities. Hence, the focus is on understanding the identified social problem against making a prediction about it.

A benefit of qualitative studies, among many others, is the fact that it considers the subjective feelings of the participants as a very important basis for understanding a social phenomenon. Some highlighted advantages of a qualitative study also include that it enhances the understanding of human subjective experiences such as rejection, pain, anger, care, love, and powerlessness, among others (Merriam and Tisdell 2015). It should be noted that subjective experiences go beyond all the aforementioned categories as it could also imply the meaning we attribute to them. Considering the nature of such experiences as highlighted, it is difficult to quantify or assign numerical values. To fully understand issues about human experiences, especially when very little information is available, a qualitative research design is therefore usually the most appropriate. Qualitative research also seeks to understand the various individual perceptions of a social phenomenon (Denzin 2017), which is consistent with the tenets of sociology that view society as a complex whole. In the process of this holistic investigation, careful attention is paid to the subjective narratives of participants; the researcher develops an abstract thinking process to understand the research findings grounded in the perspectives of the participants in relation to theoretical tenets. The uniqueness of qualitative design is further appreciated in the flexibility and emerging nature of its research methods (Ritchie et al. 2013; Marshall and Rossman 2014; Merriam and Tisdell 2015).

Notwithstanding the listed strengths of qualitative research design discussed above, Lewis (2015) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015) identified some demerits of this design. It is argued that qualitative design is not easy to implement as the process is usually time consuming. In addition, the data-collection phase involves a lot of hand-written notes (fieldnotes), which requires a cumbersome process to sort and organise and there are usually no fixed systematic directives to replicate the study.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the need to explore the reasons why women use traditional aphrodisiacs made the qualitative design the most applicable approach in this study. It is therefore important to comment further on what an exploratory qualitative design entails. An exploratory qualitative research design is usually adopted when there is a need to understand how people experience a chosen social phenomenon within society (Maxwell 2012; Marshall and Rossman 2014). It is also understood as research carried out to gain new knowledge and insight about a certain social phenomenon (Creswell and Creswell 2017). The purpose is that through exploratory phenomenological research, the true meaning of a phenomenon can be uncovered by examining the experiences of individuals who had gone through some experience or encounter (Vilakati 2009). This study adopted an exploratory design by making use of a phenomenological lens to gain new insight into why women in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, use traditional aphrodisiacs and to assess their understanding of these traditional sexual stimulants in relation to their sexual behaviour and sexuality. Of cognisance among the aims of the research is understanding the influence of traditional aphrodisiacs on women's sexual agency, sexual behaviour, sexuality, and notions of sexual power in intimate relationships.

I therefore approached the field with curiosity from the point of someone not knowing. As highlighted by Lewis (2015) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015), one of the major features of qualitative research design is that it contains various strategies with varying techniques of investigating knowledge. As such, it is important to clearly identify a strategy that suits the aim of investigation in every qualitative study. This study is positioned within the confines of a qualitative phenomenological lens, which is discussed in detail below.

3.3.1 A phenomenological understanding of women's actions

Phenomenology describes a method of inquiry that provides a detailed description of conscious experience without recourse to (re)producing metaphysical assumptions or advancing traditional philosophical questions (Dowling 2007; Van Manen 2016). Part of the factors that

influenced the development of phenomenology is the need to study consciousness outside the traditional assumptions of the natural sciences. Phenomenology emerged in an era when naturalism was critiqued and considered inadequate for studying human experiences. Husserl saw a need to develop distinct and rigorous methods that seek to understand the human perception of reality. Phenomenology attempts to provide a thick description of the lived experiences of individuals or groups without making an inference from existing assumptions about the objective reality being studied (Giorgi 2008).

Phenomenology takes account of the meaning of a phenomenon through the narratives of those who have experienced or are experiencing it (Eatough and Smith 2008). The preoccupation of a phenomenological study is to explore and describe a phenomenon in detail (Dowling 2007). It examines the experience of participants regarding a given social situation; hence, questioning what is perceived to be reality from the participants' perspective (Giorgi 2008). Phenomenological studies seek to answer the following question: What is the essence of a phenomenon to the people experiencing it? It answers this question by asking further questions, such as: What is the phenomenon experienced and lived? What impact does it have on people's lives? In phenomenology, experience in this sense refers to human involvement in a situation before the interpretation of the situation (Vilakati 2009). It aims to make sense of the layers of interpretations of a phenomenon disclosed by participants while sharing their experiences (Van Manen 2016).

Considering the variety of strategies inherent in qualitative research design, researchers are burdened with making appropriate choices. It is therefore important to know when to adopt or incorporate phenomenology as part of the entire research design. The purpose of phenomenological research as stated above is to understand the essence of phenomena in human lives by questioning the meanings humans make of the phenomenon and how it has changed or affected their lives. Accordingly, it presents a description of such meanings as articulated by those who experienced it (Giorgi 2009). For instance, in relation to the aims of this study, it was imperative to incorporate a phenomenological research approach in order to build understanding of the lived experiences of women who have used or who are using traditional aphrodisiacs, as well as the men who shared their perspective on this. It also allows a detailed understanding of the influence of this phenomenon on their sexual agency, sexuality, and the perception of sexual power. Phenomenology is therefore important when there is a need to develop a deep understanding of human experiences, to expand knowledge about certain phenomenon, to foster human responsibility in the construction of realities, and to gain insight

into the relationship between experiences and the concepts and theories used to explain those experiences (Van Manen 2016).

Phenomenology usually adopts two approaches to making sense of human experiences. It first captures the lived experience of participants and secondly applies a hermeneutical method to make sense of the texts and shared experiences to arrive at a symbolic meaning (Kafle 2011). After a thorough search through classical and contemporary literature on phenomenology, Vilakati (2009) identified some essential steps in a phenomenological study that strengthen the quality of data gathered and the research findings. I include it here because it has relevance for my study.

The *first* is descriptive phenomenology, which is the exploration, analysis, and description of social reality from an intuitive perspective that is free from presuppositions (Giorgi 2012). Descriptive phenomenology describes participants' lived experience systematically to effectively present the essence of such a phenomenon (Giorgi 2009). It adopts an intuitive strategy that analyses and effectively describes the phenomenon.

Secondly, the phenomenology of essence emphasises that the researcher searches through collected data to develop common themes and establish patterns of relationships between the shared experiences of participants (Giorgi 2008). It distinguishes between what is essential in a study and what is accidental in the description of a phenomenological study (Finlay 2012).

The *third* is constitutive phenomenology. This dimension of phenomenology studies social phenomena as they become established or part of human consciousness. This is a process through which an individual makes sense of the meaning or implications of a phenomenon in their lives (Sandmeyer 2009).

Fourthly, Vilakati mentioned reductive phenomenology. This is an ongoing process throughout a phenomenological study. It describes a process through which the researcher brackets him-/herself from the process of the research so that personal beliefs, bias, or sentiments do not interfere with the participants' narratives. It detaches the phenomenon being studied from the beliefs and biases of the researcher to ensure that reports of participants' experiences are not distorted. Abawi (2012) argued that bracketing bias is an essential step to ensuring objectivity in a phenomenological study.

For this study, I personally first had to properly reflect whether I had any biases, sentiments, and beliefs about women who use traditional aphrodisiacs that could influence the study.

This process involved a critical reflection on and self-examination of my personal beliefs that could influence the outcome of the research. This principle emphasised that I needed to be reflective in the process of the research. It was therefore important that as a ‘male researcher’ born and groomed in a patriarchal society that has normalised various beliefs about women that I remain unbiased in my research.

Finally, Vilakati (2009) described the interpretative aspect called hermeneutic phenomenology. It focuses on interpreting hidden meanings in phenomena that are not explicitly observable through direct investigation but rather through the immersion of the researcher in the experiences shared by participants to develop an essence of the phenomenon (Kafle 2011). It relies on the subjective experience shared by participants in a study.

The steps explained above entail that even though the entire research design emphasises the subjective experience of participants as sacrosanct for gaining knowledge, it is important that the researcher strives to work to retain critical objectivity (as far as possible) and keep biases in check. The researcher needs to first clarify a personal description of the phenomenon being studied and must subsequently bracket personal beliefs, sentiments, and biases about the phenomenon. Furthermore, the researcher is expected to go into the field to interview participants in a manner that allows the unhindered narrative of participants’ perceptions. Among the steps highlighted by Vilakati (2009), the following became very instrumental for this study. The first is reductive phenomenology that emphasises a need for researchers to clearly state their positionality in relation to the research. This enables to some extent objectivity in a qualitative design. Secondly is the phenomenology of essence, which speaks to identifying crucial common themes and patterns across participants’ narratives in order to provide a detailed and informed discussion of the phenomenon being observed. Following the identification of common themes, I provided a detailed discussion in my analysis chapters of how women described the influence of aphrodisiac use on various aspects of their lives, which is what Vilakati (2009) called constitutive phenomenology. The next section discusses some essential steps for conducting a successful phenomenological study.

3.3.2 Strategies for conducting a phenomenological study

Intuition is described as one of the most important strategies to bring to the fore in a phenomenological study (Chudnoff 2013). This study operationalised intuition as critical reflection on data without bias. This is a process of thinking through the data to ensure that the

experiences of the participants have been effectively captured and described (Wojnar and Swanson 2007). Intuiting usually has the researcher embedded in the phenomenon; looking critically at the phenomenon without layering it with what they have bracketed. Intense concentration is one of the most important features of intuiting (Spiegelberg 2012). The process allows the researcher to develop a critical and detailed interpretation of a phenomenon. This study, through an intuitive process, investigative probing, and careful interrogation of the data, captured and reported a detailed understanding of why women use traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, and how it influences their sexual agency and sexuality.

Another crucial strategy is bracketing. Bracketing is the process of separating assumptions and presuppositions from the process of the research (Chan, Fung and Chien 2013). Bracketing is important throughout the process of the research to ensure that the researcher objectively investigates the chosen social phenomenon without interference. This ensures that the researcher remains neutral with respect to belief and disbelief as regards the phenomenon being studied. This was discussed earlier in this chapter under reductive phenomenology.

A crucial phase in every phenomenological study is the analysis. At this point, both the dimensions discussed above as well as the strategies need to be reflected on. The phenomenological analysis involves identifying common factors and recurring themes in the narratives of participants to describe their experiences. The researcher therefore listens to and compares the various narratives given by participants to arrive at a description of the phenomenon. Hence, themes and related patterns are discussed (Bradbury-Jones, Irvine and Sambrook 2010). After the fieldwork and interview transcription, I went through the transcripts several times to identify common patterns and to develop themes to describe the participants' realities. This is what Creswell and Creswell (2017) described as the process where the researcher gets immersed in the data. This immersion allowed me to uncover similarities and differences and to discover unfolding narratives from the data about the use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women.

The final phase of a phenomenological study entails providing a detailed description of the phenomenon (through a written or oral report) (Van Manen 2016). This description is usually distinct and enlightening. It exposes hitherto unexplored narratives about the social phenomenon. While this is a very important phase, the researcher must be aware that premature description is a methodological flaw that overshadows other important themes that emanate

from the studied phenomenon (Finlay 2012). In this study, the description included classifying and exploring all important factors common to the participants regarding the reasons why women use traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, and how it influences their sexual agency and sexuality.

3.4 RESEARCH LOCATION: ILORIN, KWARA STATE, NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

3.4.1 Understanding the socio-cultural features of Northern Nigeria and some challenges women face

Earlier in this thesis, I argued that traditional aphrodisiacs among women (*kayan mata* in particular) are historical and form an important part of the cultural practices in Northern Nigeria (Abdullahi and Tukur 2013). Hence, it would be ideal that I conduct the research in Northern Region states; however, for some very strategic reasons that will be revealed in this section, Ilorin City in Kwara State became the choice location for this study.

Like any other region within the country, Northern Nigeria is characterised by some distinct socio-cultural features, which include that it is highly populated by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group and Islam is the predominant religion in the region (Abubakar et al. 2007; Baba 2011). Prior to the dominance of Islam in Northern Nigeria, 'tribal religions' were a popular practice within the region, as was the case across most parts of the country (Gilliland 1986). However, following the Islamic crusade of Usamn Dan Fodio, popularly called 'the cleansing' in the 19th century, Islam was institutionalised but not without assimilating some elements of the cultural practices of the region (Ojo 2007). Some of the socio-cultural practices that survived the integration of Islam into Northern Nigeria include the various rites of passage for marriage and particularly the use of traditional aphrodisiacs (*kayan mata*).

The relationship between the cultural, religious, and political life of Northern Nigeria reflects the values and belief system of Islam to a large extent (Krings 2005). Islam provides very important tenets of political and legal actions that mediate the relationship between the state and the populace in this region more evidently than in any other part of Nigeria (Ojo 2007). For instance, the institutionalisation of Sharia law is an important part of Northern Nigeria's legal system. Three important historical events shaped the contemporary nature of culture, religion, and politics in Northern Nigeria. Among these historical influences is the precolonial and colonial history of the region. The Northern Region, like the Nigerian state itself, is a

colonial project (a creation of colonial administration in the early 20th century), even though the relationship between the various communities integrated together predates colonialism. A unique feature of Northern Nigeria is its religion (Suleiman 2009). Islam has survived colonial and postcolonial influences. Islam was and still is a strong force that defines the dominant culture, beliefs, norms, values, and mores in the Northern Nigerian social system (Baba 2011).

Northern Nigeria comprises predominantly Muslims and as such are bonded by the laws of the Shariah (Quran) and the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad. Islam as a religion consists of fundamental principles that shape and govern the holistic essence of human existence as an individual and as a member of society (Weimann 2010). It has its own legal system (Shariah law), it prescribes the appropriate mode of dressing for men and women, and it teaches norms that regulate behaviour, inheritance, marriage rites, and family systems in general. Islam therefore regulates the way of life of the Muslim and the majority of the inhabitants of Northern Nigeria adhere strictly to these religious tenets. As such, Islam has become a defining factor for many Nigerians from the Northern Region. The debates presented in this study about the correlation between Islam and various sexuality practices are debates and contestations and in no way represent a holistic interpretation of the religion or its dictates.

The experiences of women within Northern Nigeria quite often dominate public discourse because of perceived gender inequities due to dominant social and religious orthodoxies of the region. Just like most parts of Nigeria, the region is complex, with people from different groups characterised by diverse cultural orientations towards the concept of women's rights. For example, several young women are subjected to female genital mutilation, a practice that kills women and young girls daily in sub-Saharan Africa and, among many things, is justified by social institutions such as religion and culture. Women are excluded from inheritance because of the belief that Islam does not recognise their right to share in the properties of their deceased father or husband (Ezeilo 2006). This is challenged by several activists who argue that the Quran does not exclude women from inheritance rights, nor does it perpetuate the subjugation of the woman (Esposito and DeLong-Bas 2001). However, these narratives are indications and examples of how religion is fundamental to how the life of individuals are shaped. Religion shapes gender relations despite emerging contestations and historical influences.

Early marriage has also been a serious social issue that characterises Northern Nigeria and this is somewhat linked to Islam's promulgation of polygynous unions (Munro et al. 2010).

Girls are forced into marriage from ages as young as nine to older men without their consent. Women in Northern Nigeria are often subjected to the mercy of men – husbands and fathers. In addition, their rights and liberties are most often overshadowed by the desire and wishes of their male counterparts. Purdah, as practised in Northern Nigeria, restrains women from socialising and mixing with people. For married women, it is taboo to be seen by a man who is not her husband. Even though traditional aphrodisiacs are very popular, this conservative religious belief system raised many ethical and safety issues for me as a researcher. In a community where married women are not allowed to meet with any man except their husband, gaining access to this category of participants within this region would have been very difficult. Even in cases where some of these women might have been willing to go through the risk of speaking to me, it would pose a great danger to the woman and myself as a researcher in a region where Sharia law prescribes serious punishment for such actions. It was therefore important that this study inevitably included women who were more progressive, from a region less conservative in its approach to religion and sexuality.

This succinct description of the socio-cultural and religious terrain of the most part of core Northern Nigeria where Islamic fundamentalism is rife brings to the fore reasons why a less conservative region became more desirable for this research. A critical analysis of some serious challenges that women face in this region is closely linked to the socio-religious life of the people. It is very important to provide this background information as I begin to discuss the location of the research: Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. Appreciating these peculiarities will enable a better understanding of why Ilorin became the preferred study location.

3.4.2 Ilorin as a choice location

There is usually a heated debate on the ‘Northernness’ of Ilorin. Even though the city is politically classified as a Northern Central State, many people believe this is a political strategy to support the minority Fulani inhabitants of the city, who have become politically influential in the state and country at large. Because the Fulanis are the minority within the state, affiliating Kwara State to the Northern Region will give them home support and influence. Also, it is important to state that the history of Ilorin is very controversial as there are many accounts to how it emerges as a confluence of political, socio-cultural, religious and economic locations. The account presented in this thesis is one of the several accounts about the city of Ilorin and does not in any way discredit other sources. To fully understand the nuances around this debate,

it is essential to examine the history of the city. It is in explicating the history that this research brings to the fore the reasons why Ilorin was deemed a more accessible location to examine the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women than core Northern Nigeria. This discussion will journey through history and archival records to identify events that explain the similar socio-cultural and religious lifestyle between Ilorin and core Northern Nigeria. Ilorin was also a preferred location because it is a city of integration of cultures; hence, I expected a more dynamic population of sexuality.

Cultural exchange and processes of assimilation between Ilorin and Northern Nigeria predate the 21st century, considering the prevalence of precolonial inter-regional trade. However, the 19th century becomes a very relevant point in the history of the city as there were intense processes of cultural and religious assimilation. The discussion of the relationship between the Fulanis of Northern Nigeria and the Yoruba Afonja people of Ilorin is usually explained in the historical account of reasons why contest to the Ilorin throne has become very rife.

There is an ongoing rivalry for the monarchical dynasty of Ilorin between the Fulanis and Afonjas (Yoruba inhabitants of Ilorin). The Fulanis argue that for a very long time, the monarchical seat of Ilorin was occupied by them; however, the counterclaim of the Afonja descendants, who, like the majority of the people in the city, are Yoruba, is that their ancestors founded the city and their claim to the throne should not be disputed. Historical evidence shows that Ilorin was founded between the 18th and 19th centuries by Afonja, the *Are Ona Kakanfo* (Generalissimo) to the Alafin of the Old Oyo Empire, who used the town as a military base. As a nomad and Islamic teacher, Alimi arrived in Ilorin and was welcomed by Afonja to occupy some part of their land. It is often told that soon after Alimi settled in Ilorin, a rift broke out between the Alafin and Afonja. This disagreement quickly escalated into war. Afonja, who was fully aware of the religious and military prowess of Alimi, his new friend and tenant, reached out to him for support to wage war against the Alafin. Alimi mobilised his army for Afonja and they defeated the Alafin.

After this war, Afonja wanted his children to be versatile in war and understand the secret of Alimi's powers and as such sought the services of Alimi to train his children in warfare. Alimi therefore became a teacher to Afonja's children. When both Afonja and Alimi died, Alimi's oldest son (Abdulsalami) inherited his father's duty of teaching Afonja's children. A very defining moment in the history of this ancient city came right after this when it was time to elect a new leader for the town. Afonja's oldest son was challenged and defeated by

Abdulsalami, Alimi's oldest son, who had more military powers. Abdulsalami therefore became the ruler of this ancient town called Ilorin around 1831 (O'Hear 2005).

The historical narrative presented above brings to light the years of interaction, relationship, and cultural exchanges between the Yoruba people of Ilorin and the Hausa/Fulanis of Northern Nigeria. This age-old process created cultural integration between the groups.

Sociologists define cultural integration as the blending of one or more cultures that happens without sacrificing the features that make it unique, yet producing a new variance of the socio-cultural relational process (Bisin et al. 2008). These exchanges include cultures' popular beliefs, rituals, and practices. The geographical topography of Ilorin positions the city as a desirable destination for migrants from both the Northern and Southern Regions of the country; hence, over the years it has become home to diverse ethnic groups (O'Hear 2005).

Years of cultural exchange between these two ethnic groups have produced some very unique features in the city. Most importantly, and in relation to this study, Ilorin, just like core Northern Nigeria, has become a predominantly Muslim city where similar socio-cultural practices observable in Northern Nigeria are visible; for example, the prevalent use of *kayan mata* among women. Generally, Southern Nigeria predominantly practises Christianity, but Ilorin is one of the few cities in the Southern Region with a predominantly Muslim population. Nevertheless, unlike the North, Sharia law is not rigidly implemented and practised in Ilorin. Ilorin could be referred to as a liberal Muslim city where practices such as Purdah are not rigid. This means that for the purposes of this study, participants could be easily accessed and recruited to participate without posing much of a threat to their wellbeing and relationships. It also means that the city would be a safer space to examine the use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women without much fear for safety.

3.5 DOING FIELDWORK IN ILORIN

This study adopted one major type of primary data-collection method: semi-structured in-depth interviews. I provide a detailed description of this method and approach in this section.

3.5.1 Selection of participants

In this section, I discuss the study population, sample, and sampling technique. Every decision leading to the recruitment of research participants is discussed and justified below.

The population for this study comprised mainly women. Men and sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs were also included. The justification for this identified study population is that the phenomenon being investigated is one that is basically common among women. Hence, as a study that is phenomenological, it was important to collate the experience of women who are the major users of these traditional aphrodisiacs. Men as a major partner in intimate relationships were also interviewed to understand their perceptions of women who use sexual stimulants within intimate relationships. The sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs were included to provide a detailed description of the common traditional aphrodisiacs used by women within the study location.

Sekaran (2003) noted that the findings of a study conducted on a sample are used to infer meaning of how the social phenomenon affects the entire population. Studying the opinion of the entire population is impracticable because it will be too voluminous and time consuming. As such, the sample for this study was drawn from the population defined above who were married/unmarried women, men, and sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria.

As the fieldwork of this study unfolded, it was important that I became conscious of when data saturation was achieved. Saturation refers to a process whereby a detailed insight of an investigated phenomenon has been captured; adding new participants would therefore not produce new narratives (Fusch and Ness 2015). More specifically, Creswell (2007) believed that the sample for a phenomenological study should be five to 25 participants. This study set out to interview 20 married/unmarried women who use traditional aphrodisiacs, five sellers, and five men. However, during the course of the fieldwork, the number of sellers was reduced to three because at the third interview most of the information that was given about traditional aphrodisiacs became repetitive and no new insights emerged. Interestingly, the narratives shared by the men became more fascinating than anticipated and an additional interview was added to make the number six for more information. A total of 29 participants were interviewed at the end of the fieldwork (16 married women, four unmarried women, three sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs, and six men).

The reduction in sample size and composition relates to issues of information redundancy and access, as explained above. These participants were recruited from the Ilorin city centre and its environs. At the beginning of the fieldwork, I had already contacted three key informants. These women had informed me earlier they had a closed WhatsApp forum and an informal

association where they talk about sexual stimulation among married women who use *kayan mata*. This was a very important link to gain access to married women who participated in the study. Referrals were made, and I had to follow up with phone calls to make an appointment with the participants.

What I observed in the sales of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin is that they do not have a formal place where they are sold. It has become very prevalent in the city to see young girls hawking these products. They are mostly sold through informal marketing networks; women refer friends to a seller who does not have a physical store but makes deliveries upon request. The three sellers interviewed were referred by women from the study. It was more challenging to recruit unmarried (especially young) women for the study. Unlike the married women who had an informal group where they identified, shared their experiences, and enlightened themselves about new products, young unmarried women are quite secretive about their use of the product; hence, they were difficult to access. However, with the help of the sellers, I was able to find four unmarried women who participated in the study. It is important to note that more than 15 were contacted but only four agreed and made themselves available for the interviews.

Men who participated were purposively selected, but with the selection criterion that they had to be knowledgeable about women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs. Also, men were included in this study to provide additional insight as they were not the primary focus of the study. A major informal social gathering place where men are found in Ilorin, aside from bars, is mechanic workshops. Four of the interviews conducted with male participants were from these workshops and the other two were staff members of the University of Ilorin I met while I visited the professor who hosted me in the city. During the course of the interviews, I had several informal conversations with men and women across all age groups and kept a field notebook to detail their thoughts. A field notebook is often regarded as a very vital aspect of collecting and analysing data (Phillippi and Lauderdale 2018) because it details information from the fieldwork that the researcher considers to be important to answering the research questions.

All throughout the period of this research, my field notebook was my greatest companion. I used it to jot down important information that emanated in relation to the research from every setting I visited at the research location. These notes contained very important information about relevant themes and issues that affect the use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women.

This study adopted two sampling strategies, namely purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is used in research when the information required is confined to a specific group of individuals (Sekaran and Bougie 2016). The onus falls on the researcher to first define the specific characteristics that are required of the participant being sought who possesses the information needed to answer the outlined questions. For example, women who use traditional aphrodisiacs were the major participants of this study because they possess personal experience of the phenomenon of aphrodisiacs, especially with regard to how it affects their sexual agency and sexuality. Purposive sampling hinges on the fact that the information gathered from these specific participants will effectively answer the research questions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). Even though the proponents of purposive sampling have argued that it is appropriate to use this sampling method when information is required from a specific set of people who possess detailed knowledge of the phenomenon, it is also critiqued for its insufficiency to enable generalisation of information to the entire population (Sekaran and Bougie 2016).

The second sampling strategy adopted was snowballing. This strategy of recruiting participants is useful when a researcher is investigating a population that is not easily accessible or available and requires essential referrals from a few identified contacts (Sadler et al. 2010). Once the researcher identifies one suitable participant, they become a link to recruiting others who share the same characteristics as relating to the investigated phenomenon (Noy 2008). This study investigated a relatively sensitive social issue among women. It is relatively sensitive because, despite the popularity of the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women in Nigeria, married women are still 'hidden' about their involvement because of the notions of sexual power and control that are popularly linked to the usage of these traditional sexual stimulants. As such, the participants were classified as a hard-to-reach population and it became very essential that I identify participants who could provide referrals to other married/unmarried women who would be willing to participate in the research. The three key informants identified prior to the fieldwork were the links that provided referrals to other women within their circle. The relationship I built with these women allowed me to earn their trust, which made it very easy to connect with their friends who use *kayan mata*. Even though it was very difficult to recruit young unmarried women, the referrals made by the sellers of aphrodisiacs were very important for the four interviews conducted later. My selection of the sampling strategies discussed above was premised on the need to assess the participants' first-hand knowledge and to facilitate a deep exploration of the phenomenon being investigated (Smith, Colombi and Wirthlin 2013).

The basis for the selection of a sample is influenced by the nature of the research problem, purpose, design, and implications for addressing the research topic. The nature of the research problem and social issues being investigated are therefore crucial elements for sample selection (Mason 2010). All categories of participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity as stipulated and carefully outlined in the informed consent they willingly signed before the interviews began.

The inclusion criteria of this study were based on the knowledge and use of traditional aphrodisiacs. In this regard, the first questions asked before any of the female participants were interviewed was if they used traditional aphrodisiacs and for how long they had been using it. The women who demonstrated good knowledge of this act of sexual stimulation were further interviewed in depth. I therefore looked for married/unmarried women who used traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, men who were aware of women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, and, sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin.

This means that married/unmarried women who did not use traditional aphrodisiacs, men who were not informed about the use of traditional aphrodisiacs, and sellers who were not selling traditional aphrodisiac products in Ilorin were excluded from the study. This was to ensure that the detailed narratives of only those who used and were aware of traditional aphrodisiacs were captured. The nature of this research required informed participants; hence, a justification of the phenomenological aspect of the research design.

3.5.2 Data collection and analysis

The interviews took place between December 2018 and March 2019. The timing of the interviews differed across the various categories of participants. Due to the nature of this research, I felt it was necessary to use the assistance of more than one female fieldworker. They assisted to gain access to and make the women more comfortable during the interviews. These research assistants were recommended by a professor at the University of Ilorin who had worked extensively in the area of reproductive health in the city. A training session of two days was organised. On the first day, I explained the aim and objectives of the study to them and ensured that they understood the intent and purpose of the research. During our second session, the research assistants were properly briefed, and mock interviews were conducted. After these mock interviews, I had to further reiterate the need for the research assistants to ask follow-up questions to further draw insight into the narratives of the participants. Irrespective of the

training, I was part of the entire process, even though the female participants were more comfortable with the female research assistants as lead interviewers in some cases.

After the first five interviews, I discovered that some participants were not saying much and did not really open up; however, in this list of five, two interviews stood out as the participants completely opened up and exposed deep-seated debates about the use of traditional aphrodisiacs. Upon listening to the interview recordings several times, a participant mentioned that she was comfortable discussing this very private matter of her life with the research assistant because she had said that she was married. This immediately became a turning point for how the fieldwork was approached. Going back to listen to the other three interviews without many details, it was discovered that these interviews were between the unmarried research assistant and married participants. Following this discovery, there was an immediate need to re-examine my approach and to begin to match the participants and research assistants. Subsequently, the married research assistant was paired with married participants and the unmarried research assistant interviewed unmarried participants. This process was very effective as I discovered as the interviews continued that most of the married participants in the study saw marriage as a very strong identity that bears responsibilities and challenges that might not be easily understood by an unmarried woman. This was basically the reason why they did not open up at the earliest stage of the fieldwork. In addition, some of the other women preferred talking to me directly because they felt it was important that men understood their opinion and perspective about issues like this. These women believed that it was important to see men become interested in women's practices. These experiences were very fascinating and showed new dimensions into the investigation of sexuality within a predominantly patriarchal society.

The interviews with married women were more complex as the research assistants and I had to follow up most of the interviewees with subsequent interviews. After every interview, I took the time to listen to the voice recordings and identify areas that needed further questioning and explanation. Some of these women were interviewed three times while others were interviewed twice but, on average, each of these sessions lasted for 45 minutes. The interviews with men were also very fascinating as they had much to say about how they thought the use of traditional aphrodisiacs affected the traditional conception of femininity and how it threatened masculinity. These interviews lasted between 45 and 80 minutes. The interviews with the sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs were shorter as they basically provided descriptive

information about the products they sold and identified the most commonly used ones. These interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The interviews were conducted in English, but in some cases during the course of the interview, some participants said some things in Yoruba. Because of my good grasp of the Yoruba language, I easily translated this into English during transcription but with some eminent challenges of finding an appropriate word. This becomes more complex because discussions around sex are often talked about in coy form where people use metaphors, innuendo, and vague comments to communicate their intent. It was therefore very complex to find the ‘right’ English word to describe some of the comments made by the participants about sex. All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed by me for analysis. The transcribed interviews were managed and coded with the use of NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd, NVivo 12 Pro).

3.5.2.1 Interview process

This study adopted semi-structured interviews to unravel and explore the use of traditional aphrodisiacs by women in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. Creswell (2014: 190) noted that qualitative interviews involve ‘unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants’. This interview type was preferred because it allows for flexibility in the order in which questions are posed and allows participants to engage with the researcher without specific restrictions. It also allows the researcher to explore supplementary questions to suit the purpose of the interview to ensure that the research objectives are addressed adequately (Bryman 2008).

An interview guide containing questions flexibly crafted to address the research objectives was developed to guide the interview process and to ensure that all participants in their different categories were asked the same questions meant for their group. The interview schedule contained questions that investigated the motivations for the use of traditional aphrodisiacs and how they influenced women’s sexual behaviour and sexual agency. Sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs were also interviewed to understand the products commonly used by women in Ilorin, and the opinion of men was sought about women who use various traditional sexual stimulants. The interview guide was not meant to limit the researcher and participants, as the interviewer probed beyond the listed questions if the participants needed to expand/clarify an experience they shared. It should therefore be noted that this further probing did not imply

asking a new question, but a follow-up question to further understand or explore a thought shared by a participant in relation to the research.

Interviews across the different categories started with questions about the participants' biographical information, such as 'Please tell me about yourself, who you are, your age, and what you do for a living?' These questions were aimed at knowing more about the interviewees and to create a comfortable environment for them to have a conversation. It was important to get them to say something they might be eager to disclose such as talking about who they are before moving on to the more detailed discussion related to the study aim. The responses from these questions differed greatly among the participants. They ranged from a very detailed description of themselves and sometimes comic praises of their lineage and clan, to very short and specific responses about their identities. Because of the nature of the research, some participants were not comfortable saying anything about themselves; all they wanted to do was to participate in the study without any link or traces to them. This is despite the fact that the informed consent was explained and the clauses on anonymity and confidentiality were mentioned.

Some participants from the point of introducing themselves delved into narrating how they encountered traditional aphrodisiacs and their experiences. This automatically meant that, in some instances, it was difficult to return to the interview guide because as they narrated their stories, they touched on the questions they should be asked. However, either through direct questioning or during the course of the interview, all participants covered the various questions listed on the interview schedule.

During the course of the interviews and on several occasions, follow-up questions were asked based on the narratives of the participants. These probes served as an aide-memoire; as a brief set of prompts to address a certain range of topics (Bryman 2008: 438) that emanated from the interview process. It was discovered that the participants discussed many of the themes listed under different questions concurrently. For example, there were questions targeted at the influence of traditional aphrodisiacs on women's sexual agency and the notion of power within the familial terrain. Sexual agency and sexuality were discussed in close relation to the dynamics of power relations in intimate relationships. Throughout the process of the fieldwork, probes were added to the interview schedule usually because there was a need to understand in detail some issues raised by the participants.

The importance of these interviews was to understand the experiences of women who use traditional aphrodisiacs and the meanings they attach to it. Through the discussion of their journey with these traditional aphrodisiacs, the reasons why they began to use it and how they had managed it in relation to their relationships helped to gain understanding of how the stimulation of sex with the aid of various traditional aphrodisiacs is connected to women's sexual agency and sexuality. These discussions helped me to identify important ways in which the sexuality of women within Ilorin is being (re)shaped. It brought to light very essential relationships between food, body, and sexuality, and a compelling discussion of how sexual agency is redefined and negotiated in intimate relationships.

As they reflected on their journey and highlighted how they have used traditional aphrodisiacs (*kayan mata* specifically) over the years, insightful understanding of how this had shaped their lives was established. Most of the women interviewed drew a comparison between periods when they had not started using *kayan mata* yet and when they had been using it to comprehensively explain its influence on their sexual lives and relationships. They also actively compared their sexual lives and relationships to those of their friends, who do not use *kayan mata*, to validate its efficacy.

The interview sessions were recorded with a digital voice recorder after obtaining the consent of the participants. In addition, notes were taken during the interview sessions to highlight the key points raised by the participants. These notes were an essential part of the research to ensure the validity of the digital audio recordings in case some part of the interviews became problematic during transcription.

3.5.3 The value of continuous recording: A note

All through the period of this research and with every opportunity I had to talk to married/unmarried women in Ilorin, I always initiated discussions around traditional sexual stimulation. Through observation and informal conversations with men and women throughout the time of the fieldwork in Ilorin, I gained insight into the popular narrative about women who use traditional aphrodisiacs and what women actually think of sexual stimulation as it relates to their sexual agency and sexuality. Throughout my research, I made constant notes and kept a diary in which I wrote and reflected on essential points, themes, correlations, and dissatisfaction about the use of traditional aphrodisiacs. This diary became an important

resource when I visited Ilorin for the fieldwork, as it was foregrounded by several meaningful informal conversations in the process of attempting to recruit research participants.

Gray (2013: 239) opined that observation ‘involves the systematic viewing of people’s action and the recording, analysis, and interpretation of their behaviour’. It is important to state that my role in the entire process of the research went beyond this basic description. The notes I kept throughout the period of this research were meant to help me understand the phenomenon of sexual stimulation among women in Ilorin in the later stage of my research. Also, the informal conversations I had with various individuals who were not part of my sample gave me broader insight into the complexity of sexual stimulation among women. This also served as a good opportunity to highlight the eminent issues that should be investigated in the research. I therefore acknowledge that these additional insights derived from outside the ambit of the selected interviews also textured the final data analysis.

3.5.4 Overall data analysis

This study painstakingly gathered qualitative data through a process of semi-structured in-depth interviewing. The gathered data were managed with the aid of computer-based software (QSR International Pty Ltd, NVivo 12 Pro) and recurrent patterns and themes for discussion were drawn through thematic content analysis. The recorded interviews were transcribed and then coded in NVivo. Each of the interviews was read thoroughly and the thoughts expressed by the participants were coded into major nodes and sub-nodes for analysis. The creation of parent nodes⁴ was from the research questions and objectives, while sub-nodes emanated from the coding process to describe participants’ narratives. This process could also be referred to as the classification of thoughts into similar patterns. The nodes that were created became very essential for the generation of themes and content analysis.

Once NVivo had been used to organise the data and identify the common pattern of thoughts, thematic content analysis was adopted for data interpretation. Bryman (2004: 181) defined thematic content analysis as ‘an approach to the analysis of document and texts [which may be printed or visual] that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner’. In the context of this research, the transcripts generated from the in-depth interviews were analysed and the predetermined categories were themes

⁴ Nodes are central to understanding and working with NVivo; they let you gather related material in one place so that you can look for emerging patterns and ideas. You can create and organise nodes for themes or ‘cases’ such as people or organisations.

developed based on the research questions and similar patterns of thoughts expressed by the participants in the process of coding the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) made a succinct list of the process of thematic content analysis, namely familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a research report. This type of analysis requires that the researcher is immersed in the data to be able to develop a rich description and understanding of the thoughts of the participants as related to the phenomenon being investigated.

3.6 POSITIONALITY AND REFLEXIVITY

Hatch (2002) noted that a major characteristic of qualitative research is the ability of the researcher to become a research instrument in the research. This process relies on the reflective abilities of the researcher to become a vital instrument in/for data collection. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) believed that this allows researchers to admit and clearly state their biases and ideological preferences as relating to their study. For instance, in this study, part of the ethical dilemma I had to address was my positionality as a young Christian male who was investigating a social issue relating to sex and sexuality among women who are predominantly Muslim and married.

The complexity of my identity was very relevant to the context and content of the research. My gender and religious identity became the most prevalent of all. It is seen as taboo for a man to discuss sex with another man's wife within the Islamic Sharia law, which is a religious legal system that outlines several consequences for such acts. As such it was important that I tread carefully by incorporating female research assistants into my study. Let me provide insight into how sexual relation non-conformity in Northern Nigeria is often handled. Under the Sharia, sexual intercourse is only permitted within marriage. Interestingly, sexual intercourse is often seen as not just the act of sexual penetration but also other acts that could lead to that, such as private meetings between a man and woman who are not closely related.

Illicit sexual acts are considered a punishable offence at discretion in view of the negative impact it might have on society. It is often backed with a verse in the Quran, 17:32: 'Do not come near *zina* [illicit sexual intercourse], for it is shameful [deed] and an evil, opening the road to other evils' (Ostien and Umaru 2007: 44). It is also believed that a man who engages in unlawful sexual relations commits a civil offence against the woman irrespective of whether she consented or not (Weimann 2010). Hence, after proper evidence has been provided to

establish claims, it is required that the man who committed this offence is liable for a proper bride price if the woman is not married, as well as 100 lashes for the male convict and banishment for one year.

As I interviewed the male participants in this study, it was also important that I remained conscious and critically engaged normative biases, sentiments, and assumptions that are usually held and often sustained when men talk about women. It is quite interesting in several instances during the interviews that I asked some of the male participants to kindly clarify phrases such as ‘you know, these women’, ‘all these women *wahala* [problems]’, and ‘women and their love for men and sex’. Maintaining this critical approach helped to ensure that I did not reproduce stigmatising assumptions about women.

The narratives that the participants shared were very insightful. Some of the participants expressly mentioned that they were more comfortable discussing their sex life in the presence of a woman because sharing their stories within such a setting gave them the assurance that she was well understood, as opposed to telling a man directly. On the contrary, some other participants felt it was more fulfilling to share their experiences with a man directly because that gave them the assurance that they were being heard and their approach was noticed. To these women, getting men’s attention within the context of sexual enhancement with the use of *kayan mata* means a lot for women’s empowerment. And they could also adopt this stand because Ilorin has a more liberal attitude towards women’s sexuality, as opposed to core Northern Nigerian cities, as discussed earlier. Hence, it became more glaring how my gender both limited and enhanced my ability to have a very informative conversation with these women alone. As I explained earlier in this chapter, marital status also became vital for matching participants with research assistants in the course of the fieldwork as it was discovered to be more effective for a productive conversation.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) noted that a researcher is a fundamental part of the research methodology of a qualitative study. By this, they referred to the fact that the researcher is actively involved and engaging with the emerging methods of a qualitative study – from data collection to data interpretation and report writing. As such, it is important to carefully outline ways and manners sentiments were dealt with in the course of this study to ensure its coherence. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) commented on the nature of the value-free qualitative study. They were of the opinion that because of the nature of the qualitative inquiry, bracketing researcher’s values from the process and conclusions of the research is very difficult and, as such, it takes a

conscious reflective effort to ensure validity in a qualitative study. The acknowledgement of subjectivity by the researcher is crucial to account for the adopted approach in a study. It was important that I bracket my thoughts, perceptions, and bias about traditional aphrodisiacs so as to not interfere, distort, or influence the participants' narratives.

3.6.1 Trustworthiness

One of the most popular credibility criterion processes for qualitative studies is member checking. This is a quality control process whereby research participants can look through their interview transcripts to see if they are accurate, valid, and a written translation of their experiences as communicated in the interviews (Harper and Cole 2012). In general, member checking also follows a process whereby at the end of the interview, the researcher summarises the points from the interviews to ensure that the participants' thoughts were captured accurately. Yin (2015) gave a succinct description of the processes of ensuring trustworthiness and credibility in a qualitative study. He stated that the researcher must describe and document the research procedure in a way that other people can review and understand. This is basically one of the applications of a methodology chapter – it is required to detail the processes and methods adopted in the research. Yardley (2009) described this as writing up a research report to withstand scrutiny by others. This study adopted a methodical approach that allowed for unhindered discovery and unanticipated events, as explained in the justification for the adoption of a qualitative research design. I ensured that I consistently reflected on and bracketed any bias that could, in my view, cause intentional distortion of the research process.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues are very important for any study because they ensure adherence to standardised practices in conducting research to avoid exploitation or endangering the research participants (Silverman 2009). Ethical issues are taken very seriously in the social sciences and even more so when dealing with a potentially vulnerable group. Diener and Crandall (1978) highlighted factors that should be considered in social sciences research and these are: whether there is harm to participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy, and whether deception is involved. This research was duly approved by the University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Humanities Higher Degrees' Committee before it commenced (see Annexure A). Moreover, many ethical considerations were addressed in the proposal development phase to ensure that the study complied with ethical standards.

It is important to note that sex and sexuality are fiercely debated across many cultures, especially as they relate to women's decision making. Explicit sexual expression by women is often regarded as a sign of promiscuity and, as such, the topic being investigated is one that could have easily led to the stigmatisation of the women who chose to participate, if exposed. It became important that I took serious precautions and used a careful approach that would not expose my participants to stigma and expose me to any form of danger. The first was identifying a study site that was more progressive in its approach to religion and sexuality in Nigeria, which is Ilorin, as opposed to using cities in core Northern Nigeria. This was also because my experience and knowledge of Ilorin were more advantageous and meant that I understood the various dynamics of the city and could relate better to participants from this space (language and cultural connection).

An informed consent document containing a detailed explanation of the various ways I would ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of my research participants was developed (see Annexure B). Some of the steps taken, and highlighted in the informed consent document, included voluntary participation and an option to quit participation without any explanation any time the participants felt uncomfortable, and the use of pseudonyms in report writing to protect the identity of the participants.

The purpose of the research was explained in detail to the participants and they were made aware that should they feel uncomfortable with the interview process, they could withdraw at any point. In addition, permission to record the interviews was sought. The participants were also reminded that the information they provided was confidential and that the source would not be divulged at any point in the study as only the researcher and supervisors would have access to the information gathered. At the end of the interview processes, I engaged the participants in an informal feedback session to determine how the interview process went and to ensure that the process had not left them emotionally harmed or with feelings of regret. As explained in the sampling procedure, the selection of participants was based on referrals and only those who had knowledge of *kayan mata* and were active users were interviewed, aside from sellers and knowledgeable men.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an in-depth discussion of the methodology and methods adopted in the course of this research. It highlighted the epistemological foundation that guided the research

design and data collection, as well as their justification as an appropriate methodology. This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological lens to investigate the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women in Ilorin and the implications for their sexual agency and sexuality. The justification for the adopted approach was linked to the study's aim and objectives. The approach relied on the lived experience of participants in understanding the narratives around the growing practice of stimulating sex with traditional aphrodisiacs such as *kayan mata* in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. This approach is in line with arguments that suggest that research methods should flow from research questions and not vice versa.

Following was a detailed description of the study location and the rationale for choosing the site, as well as a comprehensive discussion of the methods used for data collection. An overview of the data-collection and -analysis processes was also provided. This was followed by a detailed discussion of researcher positionality and reflexivity. The final section contemplated fundamental ethical considerations that were relevant to the study and how they were addressed. The next chapter introduces the participants' narratives regarding the use of traditional aphrodisiacs, especially on how it influences their sexual relationships and sexuality.



CHAPTER FOUR

Reflecting on Findings: ‘Popular Secrets’ and Insights into Women’s Use of *Kayan Mata*

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as an introduction to women’s use of *kayan mata*. I start by providing insight into why women use traditional aphrodisiacs (Objective 1) and to identify the commonly used types in Ilorin (Objective 2). This is done through a detailed discussion and exploration of the common types of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin and the motivation for women’s use of these products. Such an exploration will facilitate a more informed understanding and analysis of its effects on women’s sexual intimacy, satisfaction, and fidelity. Following that is a critical discussion of what men think of women who use traditional aphrodisiacs (Objective 3), which will facilitate a critical engagement of how this practice raises varying concerns and influences the notion of femininity within Ilorin.

Various cultures have different substances that serve as aphrodisiacs and knowledge of this is usually passed down across generations. These aphrodisiacs are usually believed to be very important for sexual stimulation, relationship preservation, and satisfaction (Mohammed-Durosinlorun 2008); as such, they might form a very important part of community traditional medicine, especially in the treatment of infertility and various sexually related illnesses. However, the efficacy of these aphrodisiacs and their implications for understanding sexuality and its influences on various aspects of intimate sexual life have become a great concern in contemporary times (Bello and Isah 2015). With very little knowledge in the literature about the nature, function, and influence of various traditional aphrodisiacs on women’s sexuality and sexual agency, this chapter unveils the narratives of women who draw on aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria to understand how this affects them and their relationships.

This chapter journeys through a detailed description of the most common types of traditional aphrodisiacs used by women in the study, namely *kayan mata*. It presents these women’s perceptions of *kayan mata* and provides an engaging discussion of the factors that influence their usage in Ilorin. The discussions provided in this chapter help to understand why most women draw on aphrodisiacs and their rationale for continuous use. Following this is a critical discussion of the nexus between these *kayan mata* products and food, and body and sexuality.

Succinctly described, it provides critical insight into various sexual theories that examine food and sex, body and sex, and men's sexuality. It also provides insight into the specific types of traditional aphrodisiacs common to this region, their description, and consumption/usage mediums before moving on to a more critical discussion of how it affects women's sexuality, intimate relationships, and other emerging issues.

4.2 SETTING THE SCENE

The first part of this chapter discusses *kayan mata*. This discussion is based on the narratives of married/unmarried women and sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs. Through this discussion, a comprehensive list of the common types of traditional aphrodisiacs used in Ilorin and their description is provided. This chapter uses *kayan mata* as a term that refers to traditional aphrodisiacs used by women and is literally translated from the Hausa language as “a woman's luggage”. Table 4.1 provides the participants' pseudonyms and biographical data.

Table 4.1: Participants' pseudonyms and biographical data

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Work	Marital status	No. of children
Bola	Female	33	Businesswoman ⁵	Married	2
Hajara	Female	25	Businesswoman	Single	0
Amina	Female	38	Teacher	Married	4
Aisha	Female	28	Businesswoman	Single	0
Zainab	Female	30	Businesswoman	Married	2
Abike	Female	38	Businesswoman	Married	4
Yetunde	Female	32	Civil servant	Married	3
Sola	Female	26	Teacher	Married	2
Shade	Female	25	Businesswoman	Single	0
Olabisi	Female	32	Civil servant	Married	3
Asabe	Female	27	Businesswoman	Married	2
Rukaya	Female	35	Trader	Married	4
Esther	Female	32	Businesswoman	Married	2
Ronke	Female	37	Housewife/Trader	Married	4
Aduni	Female	45	Civil servant	Married	5
Damilola	Female	34	Civil servant	Married	2
Shewa	Female	22	Student	Single	0
Toro	Female	38	Civil servant	Married	5
Anatu	Female	46	Businesswoman	Married	4
Blessing	Female	27	Teacher	Married	2
Iya-Ibeji	Female	53	Seller of <i>kayan mata</i>	Married	6
Abiye	Female	42	Seller of <i>kayan mata</i>	Married	3
Kehinde	Female	44	Seller of <i>kayan mata</i>	Married	4
Juwon	Male	33	Technician	Married	1
Alo	Male	47	Civil servant	Married	5

⁵ Businesswoman is a popular term used to describe a trader. This is someone who buys and sells different types of products. Most of the female participants in this study who were in this form of trade preferred to be called businesswomen.

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Work	Marital status	No. of children
Kayode	Male	42	Automobile repairer	Married	5
Alex	Male	38	Civil servant	Married	3
Kazim	Male	48	Automobile repairer	Married	3
Salami	Male	45	Lecturer	Married	7

Source: Researcher's compilation (2019)

4.2.1 *Kayan mata*, the 'popular secret': Women's use of local aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria

Kayan mata is a traditional aphrodisiac made from roots, fruits, plants, and animal parts. It is consumed/applied through different mediums depending on the purpose and goal it is intended to achieve. The popular avenues through which *kayan mata* products are consumed include mixing it with a soda for drinking, eating after it has been prepared as part of the ingredients of a delicacy, vaginal insertion, inhaling, spraying like perfume, artistic drawings on the body, and licking (for products that come in the form of candy).

Across various African cultures, different substances serve aphrodisiac purposes (Bello and Isah 2015). *Kayan mata* is one of the most important sexual enhancement substances women use in Northern Nigeria (Mohammed-Durosinlorun 2008).

Iya-Ibeji noted:

These products are very useful for making sex enjoyable and people use them for treating various reproductive health problems. It works for both men and women, just that I am selling the ones that women use. I know people that sell for men (Iya-Ibeji, 53, female, seller of *kayan mata*).

According to this seller, apart from the fact that *kayan mata* is used to make sex more enjoyable, it can be used to treat sexual and reproductive problems. This is substantiated by Banda, Nyirenda and Sijumbila (2017) when they argued that one of the major reasons why people draw on traditional aphrodisiacs is because of their efficacy in treating infertility. Although not much research has critically investigated the use of traditional aphrodisiacs until a few decades ago, the fact that both men and women use it to increase sexual pleasure appears to be currently and historically evident (Dabhadkar and Zade 2013).

Kayan mata is also described as an umbrella term that represents a range of traditional aphrodisiacs used by women in Ilorin. Based on my conversation with women who used *kayan mata* and sellers, a list containing the most commonly used types of *kayan mata* in Ilorin was drawn up (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Common types of *kayan mata* sold and used in Ilorin

S/N	<i>Kayan Mata</i> Name	Description
1	Vagina sweetener	This is a special mixture prepared for women. It is usually made from roots and animal parts. Some are applied through insertion or requires that the woman inhales the vapour from this cooked concoction through her vagina. It is believed to make the vagina sweeter and more desirable. Most participants mentioned that it makes the man addicted to the woman and makes him crave sexual intercourse with her often. It was also mentioned that these traditional aphrodisiacs are of different types and, like spices, they give the vagina different flavours.
2	Premature ejaculation herbs	These are special herbs that women give to men to address quick ejaculation challenges. These herbs can be used through oral consumption. It is usually mixed with a soft drink or applied to the man's food.
3	Libido booster	These are herbal mixtures prepared to increase libido and give strength. They are usually taken with beverages.
4	Intoxic	This is another herbal mixture prepared for married women. It is believed to make sex more pleasurable for both men and women. Women drink this to give their vagina an alluring flavour during sexual intimacy. Some participants mentioned that you feel your clitoris contracting and get very wet for action after use.
5	Herbs to make men spend	These herbs are common among both married and unmarried women. It can be used to extort money from men. They are specially prepared to use sex as an avenue to make the man spend lavishly on the woman. It is one of the most commonly used <i>kayan mata</i> products among young unmarried women.
6	Herbs for a cheating spouse	This is a specially made herbal mixture prepared for a cheating husband. It is meant to ensure men's fidelity. The man will not find any other woman more sexually appealing and gratifying than his wife/partner. It could also lead to extreme possessiveness and the creation of high sexual and companionship reliance. Partners are often advised to be thoughtful about the decision to use this particular type as their effects are long-lasting and difficult to get over even if the relationship should end. An example of such a herb is <i>Gindin Ayu</i> .
7	Fertility booster	These herbs are prepared to aid the fertility level of the woman. It enhances reproductive ability. An example is <i>Goron Tula</i> . <i>Goron Tula</i> not only boosts fertility but also cleans the vaginal walls and reduces infection.
8	Family planning ring	This ring is specially made for women to regulate procreation. It could also come in the form of a bracelet or waist bead but, in essence, it is a traditional measure adopted by women for family planning.
9	Dry vagina solution/lubricant	These herbs lubricate the vagina during sexual intercourse.
10	Control oil	This oil is prepared to make the man subservient to the wishes of the woman. It is used by married and unmarried women and comes in handy when the woman seeks to solicit resources from the man.
11	Command padlock	It is used for bonding partners. It is also used as a tool for bringing into manifestation personal wishes and desires.
12	Bonding herb (chicken)	This special herb is cooked with chicken. It is believed to be very effective in bonding partners together. Its effect is long-lasting and the decision to use such herbs is advised to be well thought through.
13	Breast and hip enlargement herbs	These herbs are used to enlarge the breasts and hips.

S/N	Kayan Mata Name	Description
14	Attraction set	These herbs make the woman look very attractive and charming. Women use it in intimate relationships and within their workplace. It is believed that the attraction makes people love and help the user of the herb.
15	<i>Zogale</i> (Moringa seed), <i>Gari Tamu</i>	It is a powdered preparation used for tightening the vagina. <i>Gardelli</i> is usually obtained from plants that are like onions but smaller in size and used for increasing sexual urges.
16	<i>Aya</i> (tiger nut)	It is a fruit that is used to make a sweet drink believed to increase the sexual virility of men and women.
17	<i>Dabino</i> (dates), <i>reke</i> (sugarcane), watermelon, onion, and grapes	These fruits are regarded as very useful for increasing fertility.
18	<i>Tsimi</i>	It is a herbal drink or brew that is believed to lubricate; hence, it is very useful for women who take longer to get wet or have a dry vagina.
19	<i>Sabuzu kuma</i>	It is a red powdered drink that is mixed with yoghurt. Rukaya, a 35-year-old mother of four believed that <i>sabuz kuma</i> is used to ‘drive a man crazy with desire over a woman’.
20	Chicken mixture called <i>kaza mata</i>	It is specially prepared for women who are getting married to enhance procreation and its effect ceases with childbirth, so it needs to be renewed often. It is usually very expensive.
21	<i>Ruwan zakari ayu</i>	A liquid that is obtained from the genitals of an aquatic animal (<i>Ayu</i>).
22	<i>Karin kunama</i> (scorpion sting), <i>Mandura</i> stick, <i>Adodun</i> soap	These herbs are applied to the vagina orifice for flavour and sexual pleasure for both men and women.
23	<i>Bagaruwa</i>	It is an edible fruit that is boiled and steamed through the vagina after childbirth to tighten the vagina.
24	<i>Karya gado</i> (break the bed)	These are inserted into the vagina for contraction; and honey is usually used as a lubricant.
25	<i>Sajen</i> , <i>Dayis</i> , <i>Lali</i> , and <i>Rani</i>	These are substances made from different roots and herbs. They are used to decorate different body parts. These decorations are believed to enhance a woman’s sexuality through the decoration of different body parts. It is mostly worn during wedding ceremonies by young girls. They are popularly called henna decorations (see Figure 4.1).

Source: Researcher’s compilation (2019)

Table 4.1 describes various types of *kayan mata* products that were recorded through the interviews with women and sellers. These products vary and range from those that are consumed orally, to ones applied to the vagina. It is also interesting to state that *kayan mata* herbs are used for various sexually stimulating practices that connect to beautifying body images. Body image beautification is another important part of the practice of *kayan mata* among women. This includes the beautification of the body by painting various images intended to arouse sexual desire, wearing jewellery and beads that have been specifically endowed with *kayan mata* herbs usually for fertility purposes and a signifier of sexual prowess, and the scarification of various body parts. This further highlights the fact that *kayan mata* is

not just a product for enhancing sexual performance but a culture of sexuality that reflects various aspects of women's life in Northern Nigeria.

4.2.2 Women's use of *kayan mata* and its relations to pleasure, fidelity, and commitment in intimate relationships

Some of the products listed above are also applied through the vagina by insertion, washing and cleaning, trimming of the pubic hair and purification with substances, rubbing, and steaming. These products are believed to toughen the woman's vagina and they are called *dan matsi* in general. Abike mentioned that *dan matsi* products make the vagina firm and it is the perfect recipe for a tight vagina orifice:

You know it is not good when a woman has a loose vagina, it makes sex horrible (Abike, 38, female, married, four children).

She further explained that she experienced dryness at the beginning of sexual intercourse, but that honey served as an effective lubricant. She described it as follows:

It is not enough to make my *oga* [husband] go mad [a description of intense sexual pleasure] when sleeping with me, I must feel it too but a major problem was that I get dry often but since I started using honey everything is fine now (Abike, 38, female, married, four children).

It was noticed that most of the women interviewed preferred to use honey as a lubricant because they believed it has no particles that could be hazardous to their bodies. The reasons for using these vaginal products differed slightly between married and young unmarried women. While both married and unmarried women believed that the tightening of the vaginal orifice for more pleasurable intercourse experience was important, married women in this study were of the opinion that childbirth weakened the firmness of the vagina and, as such, sex becomes less pleasurable for the man. For young unmarried women, virginity is connected to the narrowness of the vaginal orifice and it is the ideal condition for a pleasurable sexual experience. In line with this, it is important for a young unmarried woman to have a very tight vagina, otherwise men would perceive her as promiscuous. Blessing explained the need for vagina tightening in the following manner:

Men believe that as a young woman, your vagina is supposed to be tight and narrow. To them, this means that even if you're not a virgin, you have not been with many men. So aside from the fact that they believe sex with you will be more pleasurable, which is not always so, they also think you're a good girl and you don't follow men. For me, all these do not matter and in most cases, they are not

reality, but we cannot deny the fact that it forms part of the popular belief in our society. I have many friends with multiple sexual partners, but they use the vagina tightening soap often and these men will almost think they are virgins. I believe these ideas around virginity have a way of giving men security in relationships (Blessing, 27, female, married, two children).

The need to keep the vagina narrow and firm is a major influencing factor for vaginal practices among women in Ilorin. Women with what is described as loosened or slackened vaginas are believed to be undesirable for sex. In fact, they believe that if a wife does not use these substances to tighten her vagina orifice after childbirth, there is an increased chance that her husband would cheat or go after younger women with a firmer vagina for more pleasurable sexual intercourse. Women who do not use these products are seen as 'lacking strength', 'open', and 'airy'. Amina mentioned:

You see, women after childbirth in the hospitals tell themselves about *kayan mata* products that will help their vagina get back into shape quickly for the pleasure of their man. We as women attach so much importance to pleasurable sex because we feel it is essential for keeping a man. It is a common saying among women that a woman who does not work to tighten her vagina after childbirth will lack strength, will be open and airy (Amina, 38, female, married, four children).

This personal assessment of the body and the perception of what is healthy for the vagina as described above is an indication of the relationship between health and wellbeing. The distinction between what women call dry and watery vaginas is important in the evaluation of sexual pleasure. This further reiterates arguments that sexual acts are not confined or limited to just coitus. Implicatively, sexual behaviour and pleasure are usually dependent on the tightness of the vagina because it is believed that sexual intercourse is more pleasurable with a woman with a firmer vagina (Woodsong, and Alleman 2008). When a woman's vagina is excessively lubricated, it raises suspicion as her partner might complain that she had been with another person; hence, her body is hyperstimulated (Jozkowski et al. 2013).

Men are also of the opinion that sex with an excessively lubricated woman is like having sexual intercourse in a pool of water without any sense of pleasure or satisfaction (Jozkowski et al. 2013). This therefore implies that the state of the vagina is believed to play a very vital role in not only sexual satisfaction but relationship satisfaction in general. Also, while wetness is considered important for a pleasurable sexual experience, excessive wetness is undesirable. These narratives about the vagina bring to the fore some of the mediums through which women's sexuality is regulated. Virginity is cherished and encouraged, excessive arousal is unusual, and the sexual pleasure of men is prioritised.

The sellers of these traditional aphrodisiacs also highlighted the urge most married women have to ensure their partners' fidelity. All the sellers interviewed mentioned that demand was increasing among married women who live in constant fear of losing their husbands to young single women. Kehinde explained:

Most of my customers are married women who fear their husbands might be taken by young girls. A lot of them come panicking and asking for what they can use to keep their man... and it is the truth, I have young girls call me and send me WhatsApp messages every day asking me for new or stronger products they can use on men to lock them down. And if we look at it very well, most of the men they target are married, wealthy men. It is believed that married men know how to take care of women and again they will not be on your case like these young men, so they like and prefer them. Now that it is like this and most housewives now know that their husbands are not safe, they want to get the thing and hold their man very well (Kehinde, 44, female, married, seller of *kayan mata*).

The fear described by Kehinde makes married women embrace the use of vagina tightening products above any other type. These vagina tightening products, like other types of *kayan mata*, are made from roots, herbs, plants, and animal parts and usually reduced to powdered form. It is broadly applied by putting the substance in the underwear, inside the vaginal orifice with the fingertip, or in the vagina. It is also important to note that salt, vinegar, lemon, and antiseptic liquid are used by some of these women for daily vaginal hygiene to clean discharge. Most of the women interviewed in this study believed that these vaginal practices improved their sexuality and helped them ensure their partners' fidelity. However, young girls, mostly 'run girls' (a popular term used to describe young girls who have sexual/romantic relationship with older men for socio-economic benefits) use these products frequently to ensure that their clients (usually wealthy elderly men) are sexually satisfied so that their financial rewards could be increased.

While most of the participants in this study believed that these vagina tightening products were very effective traditional aphrodisiacs with no known repercussions, two female participants in this study shared contrary opinions. Olaibisi mentioned that she used some *dan mantis* products for almost a year and her experience was not positive. She explained as follows:

After I got married and had my first child, a friend introduced me to *kayan mata*, vagina tightener in particular. I started using the intoxic and the vagina tightening soap. After some time, I had itches in my private part and it gradually became worse. I was taken to the hospital after a very serious illness and the doctors diagnosed that I have serious vagina infection. After so much persuasion, I opened up to my husband that I was using *kayan mata*. It was difficult to open up initially because I did not tell him that I was using it at that time. I recovered after a while.

I became very confused about the efficacy of *kayan mata* and I had battled with that ever since. As an alternative, I started using local substances to serve aphrodisiac purposes, such as using tiger nut juice, honey, ginger, among others (Olabisi, 32, female, married, three children).

On the other hand, Asabe believed that the vagina tightening products were quite efficient and without side effects; however, like other products within the country that have enjoyed popular demand, some scrupulous individuals take advantage of increased demand to produce fakes. She explained further:

I don't have any doubt in *kayan mata* in general and the vagina tightening products in particular because I use them very well. For all the years I have been using it, I have not seen any side effect or heard of any. In fact, I have friends that used it to treat vagina discharge and infection but like any other thing that is in popular demand in Nigeria, some people will make the fake. So, what I noticed is that there are lots of products out there that they claim are *kayan mata* but they are not. One needs to be careful, so you do not buy things that will kill you, you must buy from a trusted seller. I wouldn't expect any woman to patronise a random seller on the street. I tell my friends to only use sellers that we know very well (Asabe, 27, female, married, two children).

Most women in this study believed that vagina practices were important for stimulating sexual intercourse and, as such, are practised very regularly. However, considering the sensitivity of the vagina as a vital organ of the body, some participants mentioned that women should be cautious with the application of these aphrodisiacs to their private parts. Olabisi highlighted that she started asking some very important questions, especially about the vaginal insertion products and intoxicics, after her ordeal. In the next section I present a critical discussion of men's narratives of women's use of *kayan mata* before moving on to the perceived impact of *kayan mata* use on the notion of femininity.

4.3 MEN'S PERCEPTION OF WOMEN WHO USE TRADITIONAL APHRODISIACS: KAYAN MATA

This section presents men's opinions of women who use *kayan mata*. It provides a detailed discussion of the issues that are germane to the male participants in this study as regards the practice of sexual stimulation among women in Ilorin. Critically engaging these conversations brings to the fore important issues that further reiterate the essence of this study, which is to examine how the use of traditional aphrodisiacs influences women's sexual agency and sexuality. It is important to highlight that both the men and women interviewed in this study shared similar opinions as to why women use *kayan mata* in Ilorin. Some of the factors

highlighted to be influencing women's use of these aphrodisiacs included the need to ensure men's fidelity, to enhance love and commitment within intimate relationships, and for family stability.

4.3.1 Factors that influence the use of *kayan mata* among women in Ilorin

Earlier in this study it was highlighted that *kayan mata* is a sexual cultural practice among ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria (Mohammed-Durosinlorun 2008). More recently it has become a phenomenon that is spreading across the country among women of various age groups, classes, and social statuses. While *kayan mata* has been a cultural practice in Northern Nigeria believed to have been in existence for over five centuries (Chime 2009), more recently, cultural diffusion between different regions of Nigeria, enhanced by increasing internal migration and advanced virtual connectedness, has made *kayan mata* a popular contemporary discussion. This study therefore sought to understand and identify some of the factors that influence the use of *kayan mata* in Ilorin.

4.3.1.1 *Kayan mata stimulates love, and enhances sexual satisfaction and relationship preservation*

Most of the men interviewed in this study believed that the married women who used *kayan mata* did so because they wanted to preserve their relationships. The desire for the woman to preserve her relationship is the major motivation for her use of *kayan mata*. Kayode mentioned:

When we look at this thing very well, most of the married women in particular that use this *kayan mata* thing is because they want to keep their [men] home. They don't want their husband to cheat or start following girls outside because once this thing happens, the man will start spending the money he should use to care for his wife and children on girlfriends. So we are the major reason why they use these things in the first place. But I am not talking of those young girls outside, ooh, their own is another thing, in particular, those ones want to use it to take people's husbands and collect money from men. It gets to a point where they can even tell you to be selling the things you have just to give them money. That is why I don't know if they mix their own with *juju*⁶ but it is scary (Kayode, 42, male, married, five children).

From Kayode's narrative, it was discovered that the desire to preserve men's fidelity through prioritising their sexual needs is a major factor that influences the use of *kayan mata* among women in Ilorin. Most participants drew a link between sexually satisfying men and ensuring

⁶ *Juju* in this context is used to describe a form of sexual desire and pleasure that is linked to powers beyond the natural.

their fidelity, as well as relationship commitment. Most of the men interviewed also felt that women linked overall relationship satisfaction to sexual satisfaction and, as such, they did everything within their power to ensure that their partners were sexually satisfied.

In addition, it is also believed that *kayan mata* bonds partners together and enhances relationship love and commitment. Juwon, who described himself as a man who used to be a very successful flirt, believed that *kayan mata* makes a man and woman love themselves deeply. He said it creates a strong bond that translates to commitment and relationship satisfaction. He described this as follows:

I used to follow women a lot, in this Taiwo Road then. I can say I tried with my *ishekushe* [promiscuity] until about four years ago when I met my wife. She knew I chase women a lot and sometimes say it to abuse me but honestly, it got to a point that I did not know why other women don't appeal to me. I just will not like them or have the strength to follow them. It took me a while before I actually thought my wife must have used this thing for me but even though I think I like my new self, I don't spend money unnecessarily because the little I make now is to take care of my family and my son. I have more savings. My wife definitely must have gone out for my flirting problem and they gave her the *kayan mata* thing, she did not admit it because I have used style to ask her but I know she's using something. She used to give me this soya milk drink very often that it is good for my body and I have started thinking maybe this is what she's using to get me. But what I know and have heard is that women use these things so it can help their husbands to focus on them and their children. You would not look outside at those girls that can destroy your family [laughs] (Juwon, 33, male, married, one child).

Juwon's narrative, as well as the ones presented earlier, all bring to the fore some of the effects of *kayan mata*, which include pleasuring the partner during sexual intercourse, enhancing love and commitment in the relationship, and enabling men to stay committed to and responsible for their family by limiting infidelity. These narratives are very instructive regarding how participants and the society in which this study is located perceive women's agency and how it shapes the conception of women's sexuality. Another narrative that emerged from the discussions with men in this study is that *kayan mata* helps to ensure family stability.

4.3.1.2 'A wise woman builds her home': The narratives of men on preserving marriages and households

As with men, love stimulation, sexual satisfaction, and relationship preservation are targeted at ensuring family stability, especially among married women. Most of the men interviewed believed that the culture within which they were socialised prioritised marriage and family as a very essential component of society. In addition, women are seen as the homemaker while

the man is more of a provider; this indirectly makes the woman feel responsible for her home and ensuring that it does not fall apart. Hence, it is not enough to be married – it is important to stay married. There are norms that discourage divorces and even if it happens, the woman is often blamed and stigmatised. Kayode, while talking about why it is important for women to stay married, noted:

The truth be told, we live where it is the woman's duty to keep the home together, so she must want what I want as a man. Because even if we divorce, nobody will talk about the man. She will be the one they're talking about; that she cannot stay in a man's house, maybe because she's too proud, arrogant, or pompous. In fact, nobody will want to remarry her. Divorce or just separation is more damaging for a woman than the man. The man will continue his life and even marry 100 more women if he wants to but the woman can't. They will carry rumours about her and tag her as having a bad attitude. You hear things like, "Look at her, she cannot even keep her man and she's here telling us nonsense." It is that terrible and the reality of our culture so most women do everything they can to keep their home. A woman that is not in her husband's house after some time is seen as having a problem and all. It will be like something is wrong with her (Kayode, 42, male, married, five children).

This normative role of women within the locale of the study as homemakers and home keepers can be connected to the domesticated role of women; many women see their immediate nuclear family as their estate and their children as their security. The use of *kayan mata* is therefore believed to be influenced by the dire need to ensure a man's fidelity and his commitment and responsibility to his family. In addition, Alex added that the very common practice of infidelity among men makes women use traditional aphrodisiacs such as *kayan mata*. He explained as follows:

We're all men and we know ourselves. We love women and can be attracted to several at the same time. See, my brother, I can't lie to you and you also must not lie to yourself [laughs], we all know we cheat a lot and it is difficult to stay with one woman. So do we really need to ask why women use this *kayan mata* thing? It is because they know cheating is very natural to men and if you do not hold us down, we will just end up sleeping with every woman out there. From what I know, *kayan mata* is used by women to make sure he focuses only on them. Women use this thing to save us from the hand of those girls out there and it is good for us and our children. At least, if I don't have a girlfriend, I won't be wasting money outside and everything I have will be for my family and taking care of my children (Alex, 38, male, married, three children).

Alex's narrative further substantiates the popular perception in this study that *kayan mata* is used as a relationship preservation measure. Considering that the narratives of men thus far have been receptive to the idea that women could use *kayan mata* for only family and

relationship preservation, I went further to ask if they would be happy if their partners used *kayan mata*. The tone and response switched immediately as their stories showed anger and reservation about the acceptance of the culture of *kayan mata* generally. Most of these men detested and were unsettled that *kayan mata* products were used by women to exploit and control men. It was also believed that it is mostly used by young unmarried women for this purpose. Salami had the following to say about *kayan mata* and its implications for the family:

Even though I know most married women use it for the sake of their family, we have also heard of cases where women use it to control men, even marriage. The most disturbing part is that young girls use things to lock a man down and they will now turn him into their ATM [source of finance], they will extort everything he has and now leave him miserable. These young girls target married men with women. Once they get them, the man will not care for his family again. Some even abandon their wife and children and start living with the girl in the house they must have rented or bought for her. This is how families are destroyed these days. I know several people that this has happened to and it does not always end well. This *kayan mata* thing is very bad, especially the way these young girls are using it (Salami, 45, male, married, seven children).

Not denying the ability of *kayan mata* to enhance relationship satisfaction and family preservation, Salami strongly critiqued its use as a medium to hypnotise and control men. The concerns about *kayan mata* are numerous but usually woven around its very strong hypnotising powers. Even though some very encouraging thoughts were shared by the men on the use of *kayan mata*, they feared that the prevalence of such aphrodisiacs has very serious repercussions for manhood, families, relationships, and society at large. The views expressed by most men were somewhat mixed; some were positive and many showed anxiety about women's potential manipulation and control of men. Hypnosis was one of the most disturbing concerns regarding the use of *kayan mata*, which is discussed below.

4.4 REFLECTIONS ON MEN'S CONCERNS ABOUT WOMEN'S USE OF KAYAN MATA

I would like to begin with the story of Alo, a 47-year-old civil servant and a father of five children. Alo expressed concern about the nature of love, romance, and affection that is inspired by *kayan mata*. He queried the authenticity of love in a period where you can be lured into loving and caring for a woman without having preconceived that happening. Alo was more concerned about the neglect of 'will' or 'intention' in the new style of affection that has pervaded not just marriages but casual relationships as well.

His thoughts are captured below:

My brother, you're actually raising a very disturbing topic, something that is so painful and further shows that the world is coming to an end. We do not even know what to expect any more from these women, especially these small girls going up and down destroying men. They use that *kayan mata* thing and it is becoming rampant every day. I heard it is these northern people that used to use it but now like what my people say, when modernisation gets intense, we begin to see new things and learn new things. Our women have learned new things with this *kayan mata*, ooh. As men we need to start asking ourselves some questions. Those of us that have girlfriends are now thinking twice because you don't even know if you like her genuinely or you like her because she has used something to cover your eye. All the money you're spending on her and the trips might not be because you want to but because someone has put a remote control in your brain. It is terrible, my brother. A man can't even decide to willingly love again, you can't tell. I pity the younger generation like you [a reference to the researcher], because you wouldn't know which is which anymore. Even married women are using it [*kayan mata*] and their own [the types of *kayan mata* married women use] is terrible [believed to have more potency to control men; their spouses in this context]. They just turn you into their toy that they can control anytime, all in the name of protecting you from following other girls (Alo, 47, male, married, five children).

From Alo's story, many issues are brought to the fore that will be examined in line with the thoughts and perceptions of other men in this study. These narratives begin with the common ground men share with women on the use of *kayan mata*. All the men interviewed believed that *kayan mata* stimulates love and enhances sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. However, they raised concerns as to how the use of *kayan mata* is denying men their agency to freely 'fall in love'. Implicatively, when men are exposed to these aphrodisiacs, the choice of love is no longer at will because when they do, it is very difficult to determine if it is natural or induced by *kayan mata*. It is believed that once a woman uses *kayan mata* on a man, she controls everything he does. This was predominantly linked to controlling money, as Alo noted in the extract.

4.4.1 Spirituality and the use of *kayan mata*: Is it *juju* or just an aphrodisiac?

Several men expressed their fears about the increasing use of *kayan mata* by both married and unmarried women. They believed it was no longer a speculation that *kayan mata* possessed hypnotising powers that could mess with the psyche of a man, but a reality, and that it was becoming more evident and prevalent. They believed it must be checked and curtailed. All the men in this study noted emphatically that *kayan mata* is not just an aphrodisiac that enhances sexual pleasure but a fetish/diabolic substance/material that women use to control, cage, and

hypnotise men. Kazim explained how a woman used *kayan mata* on him and how this affected his behaviour. He described the experience in the following manner:

A lady has used this female aphrodisiac on me before, that one is popularly known as *kayan mata*. I can feel that the way I act and treat her has completely changed but me, I did not immediately know why. I just realised I like her more and was always worrying if she's okay. As a man, you'll think you're just liking the girl more and caring more about her until she actually confessed that she used *kayan mata* on me for about a month to that time, I'm telling you. Until today, I cannot say why and what saved me from this woman but maybe my wife is very prayerful [religious] or she's using *kayan mata* also [laughs]. So as I was saying, she told me this after like four weeks. She said even though I was liking her more and calling her more as she can see, I did not increase the money I used to give her. The reason why she told me was even that she said she does not want to have a relationship with me again. That she used the same things she uses for other people for me, but I still did not give her more money. Since then I tell my friends and people that *kayan mata* is real and we must be careful (Kazim, 48, male, married, three children).

Kazim's narrative revealed that *kayan mata* is not always noticed when used on a man, because it is often mixed with staple food usually consumed or beverages that are very common and often used for relaxation. Therefore, like Kazim, most men hardly notice that *kayan mata* has been used on them, unless when the woman tells them. From these narratives, some of these men believed that the effects of *kayan mata* were usually operational without the knowledge of the person it had been used on; therefore, the description is that the man loves and cares more, lavishes more material resources on the woman, and stays committed to them without realising that such behaviours were induced. Most of the men in this study also highlighted that the use of *kayan mata* was most dangerous among young women who used it in exchange for financial resources from men.

In additions, Salami believed that *kayan mata* initiated love between a man and a woman even if the man was not interested. He described the potency of *kayan mata* as effectual irrespective of mutual consent. Salami narrated:

Kayan mata are very powerful substances women use to seduce men and make sex more pleasurable for men. If a woman uses it on you, you're finished as a man [laughs] ... You do not need to like her before, you won't be able to explain where your sudden love and attraction to her will come from. They have it in various forms and very simple things you will never suspect. If a woman likes you and she uses it on you, you will keep following her about like you are glued to her. This thing is very bad and now everywhere, married and unmarried women use it but the people that use it most are the unmarried women to collect money from men (Salami, 45, male, married, seven children).

Earlier in this chapter, it was highlighted that most men believe that *kayan mata* stimulates sex and ensure partners' fidelity and commitment to family responsibilities. Likewise, it was noted that most young women used *kayan mata* products to gain material and financial resources from wealthy men. Kazim believed the following:

Women use it more on men if he has money. You can imagine why those young girls will use it on you when you cannot give them anything, they would not even date you in the first place. They use it to get money from men. The man will think of them every time and will not enjoy or desire sexual intercourse with another person but her. When a single girl uses it on a married man, that man will not remember home again. That's how potent some *kayan mata* products are. There are various types of *kayan mata* and they serve diverse functions. A lady as used *kayan mata* on me before but I thank God it didn't work for extortion on me because after some time the lady confessed and said she doesn't know why it was not effective on me. She said she uses the same thing on other men and they give her money but mine wasn't effective (Kazim, 48, male, married, three children).

Hypnosis is a common feature of *kayan mata* that was attested to by the men and women in this study. It is believed that *kayan mata* is a very important leverage for women in romantic relationships to gain financial and material resources from men and to attain a position of significant influence. In addition, it allows the woman to exert various influences on the man and the relationship. This exertion of influence is what most male participants described when they said that '*kayan mata* allows women to control men'.

Most men interviewed believed that some of the effects of *kayan mata* were potentially dangerous for the perception of strength and dominance usually associated with the male gender. When Kazim was asked if he would consent to his wife's use of *kayan mata*, his response was quite fascinating as it captured the thoughts shared by most of the male participants in the study. Kazim narrated the following:

I will not allow my wife to use it. Giving her permission to use it is dangerous. She might exploit its potency. She might use it against me and begin to control me as a man. After that lady used it on me and confessed, I never got back to her. Ministry of Health needs to monitor the activities of these herb sellers that have flooded our streets with this demonic thing called *kayan mata*. Aside from that fact that *kayan mata* might have fetish powers, we also do not know the processes they go through in processing the so-called "herbs" they claim are used to make them. I have heard of a lady that used such thing on her husband and he was not able to ejaculate after a prolonged period of sex. They went to the hospital and there was nothing that could be done. It is quite unfortunate, the man died. This happened about 10 years ago though but how are we sure we've not gotten there again in this generation. Imagine me being controlled by a woman. It is not supposed to be like that, our religion and culture do not support it. We're men and we're the head, we're supposed to lead and give instruction in our homes. It is an abomination that a

woman will be the head of the home. In fact, thank God you're a Yoruba man [a reference to the researcher] and you know that our people usually say a man that is being controlled by his wife is no longer a man. He's not even fit to sit in the company of men. Women are meant to be cared for and told what to do. They only give instructions to the kids and decide what happens in the kitchen, not within the family, that is a man's duty. This *kayan mata* thing will cause problems and it is causing problems already and these women are very happy. They won't begin to lead in the home and maybe take over our society also. As men, we're born leaders and women must know that. I just look at all these people that call themselves, what, *sef* [a reference to feminists]. Man and woman are not equal. One is the head and the other is not and if anyone has a problem with that, they can ask God. This thing annoys men when I talk about it and those young girls are not even ashamed about the fact that they're using the *kayan mata* thing to control their father's age mate (Kazim, 48, male, married, three children).

From the narrative above, it is evident how Kazim drew on the popular understanding of the construction of masculinity. The traditional definition of what it means to be a man within this cultural context and across most cultures in Nigeria is often wrapped in thoughts and expectations of domineering attitudes, strength, leadership qualities, economic strength, power, and fewer expressions of emotion. Aluko (2015: 75) asserted that the 'cultural constructions of masculinity encourage men to exert male authority over women, with an important trend being bragging among friends that in spite of the fact that the wife is rich, he, as the husband, can still control her'. This is an example of how the man is perceived within the Yoruba cultural context; aside from being a provider, he is also the head and controller of the home. This male hegemony manifests in the perpetuation of positions of privilege exclusively for men through the support and reproduction of social norms that idolise male sexuality as ideal and superior. However, the use of *kayan mata* is believed by men to pose a great threat to the privileges that men enjoy as being the head of the home. The ideal they grew up with is knowing and accepting that men are the unquestionable heads of the family and the sole decision makers. These privileges are now being challenged by women they described as 'dangerous'. This threat was of great concern to all the men interviewed and the privileges of masculinity are not what they think should be relinquished. In other words, the concerns expressed about women's control over their sexual lives (through the use of *kayan mata*) offer a lens into men's insecurity about their loss of control over their position of dominance in a broader societal context. It is also observable that most of the men interviewed used religious beliefs as justification for their version of masculinity and gender relations.

4.4.2 *Kayan mata* in the ‘wrong’ hands can lead to family destabilisation

The hypnotising and controlling effects of *kayan mata* are described as a threat to the family. Family in this context is the nuclear unit consisting of the man, wife, and children. All the men interviewed believed that the original purpose of *kayan mata* was to create harmony within intimate relationships and families; however, the hypnotising potency of *kayan mata* makes it a very challenging process to consent to as a man. While they all agreed that it was good for harmonious relations within the intimate terrain, they vehemently opposed the idea that their partner should use *kayan mata* because it is potentially dangerous and could give more power to the woman than necessary. Kazim believed that *kayan mata* was a dangerous weapon if it fell into the hands of a single unmarried woman. He explained:

It is bad for single ladies that use it because they have ruined several homes. Most married men that these young girls have used it on have abandoned their families and don't perform their responsibilities at home. That is why you will see a man chasing a woman beyond any reason you can think about. When these girls have extorted everything from the man, they abandon him, and his life becomes miserable. I think *kayan mata* has got some *juju* and spiritual influence. The use of *kayan mata* has been bastardised, it used to be a sacred practice for the married, to the best of my knowledge, among Hausa people, but these young girls have spoiled that heritage and are using it to destroy homes (Kazim, 48, male, married, three children).

The concern that the potency of *kayan mata* might be leveraged by single women to seduce married men was shared by both married women and men interviewed in this research; that is, married women viewed unmarried women as competitors, and men feared women becoming ‘dangerous’ through the use of *kayan mata*. Most of the married women believed that young unmarried women often targeted married men who they believed were financially stable and used *kayan mata* to seduce and control them. Aduni expressed this fear while she was talking about reasons why the use of *kayan mata* was on the increase in Ilorin. She noted that one of the factors that influenced the increase was the narrative that married women were engaged in a contest with other women (usually young unmarried women) perceived to be threatening their relationships:

You see, a woman's beauty is like that of a flower. We rise in the morning, blossom in the afternoon with sunshine, and fall into sleep in the evening. This is a reminder that our beauty is in season. Men, on the other hand, are designed by God in such a way that years after years with the right financial and social resources, they will be able to get any woman they want. So, for most women who are married, the birth of your first and second child is signalling your gradual decline and you have to take very good care of not just your physical appearance but also your vagina.

We believe that childbirth increases the size of the vagina and subsequent birth weakens the elastic abilities of the vagina to contract together. So, for you not to lose your husband to these young girls with very tight vaginas, you use *kayan mata* to stay in shape. They [young women] know they are young and more beautiful, and coupled with *kayan mata*, they will be completely irresistible. So, personally, I fear that if these young ladies continue to have access to *kayan mata*, our families are no longer safe. This country will be a battleground where every woman will have to fight to keep her husband and marriage. I have seen families that some of these young girls destroyed; the man will just never come home again. I constantly beg the woman I buy my products from not to sell to unmarried women [laughs] (Aduni, 45, female, married, five children).

Aduni's narrative revealed most married women's concern about young unmarried women's use of *kayan mata*. The norm within this society that they have internalised while growing up teaches women to be responsible for their marriages and to do anything and everything culturally approved of to preserve it. *Kayan mata* is growing to become one of the strategies these women adopt to ensure the fidelity of their partners and to hopefully preserve their marriages and families but yet practise it within a competitive environment between married and unmarried women. Moreover, apparent from these narratives is that there seems to be an emergence of negative discourses about women⁷.

Several issues came to the fore in the course of discussing the narratives of participants in this study. Some of these concerns challenged the efficacy of *kayan mata* as a traditional aphrodisiac because there are narratives that suggest it is a *juju* mixture. While it is not within the context of this study to examine the pharmacological components of *kayan mata*, this concern relates to other issues about power and control within intimate relationships. It also leads to concerns about the changing nature of femininity and its implications for relationships, families, and society. The angst about *kayan mata* among the various categories of participants in this study is one that is multi-layered and built on ideas of what its possible influence could be on their families, relationships, masculinity, and other social factors. Suffice it to say, the concerns of married women about the growing prevalence of *kayan mata* differed from those of the unmarried women and likewise from those of men in general. Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that young women who use *kayan mata* are often stigmatised and labelled 'husband snatchers' and 'family destroyers'. This was the only concern for young unmarried women in the study. These young women believed that these stereotypes were unfair to most of them who

⁷ The perception of negative discourses about women is explained in detail in the section that discusses the notions of femininity in Ilorin.

only used it within their relationships and did not intend to date married men or destroy their families.

It is important to link these experiences to theorising about 'rewards' and 'benefits'. Sprecher's (1998) analysis of the dynamics of reward and benefit within intimate relationships is quite fundamental for understanding the narratives shared by men in this section. These rewards or benefits are usually compared in relation to the investments made in a relationship. Investment in this regard is described by Rusbult (1980) as varying inputs and commitments into a relationship that could range from time, self-disclosure to friends, to material possessions, among others. However, the findings from this study showed that what women considered as investment in a relationship went beyond common and popular economic inputs to include various socio-cultural interests and expectations that are considered important for a woman in an intimate relationship. This is very common in marriages, where women are expected to commit time and social and economic resources to the success of their marriages and families. This became more interesting upon enquiring why the participants thought it was important for women to sustain a relationship or family despite the common narrative of infidelity among men as described.

As discussed above, it is seen as a woman's responsibility to keep a marriage/relationship together as dissolution is usually blamed on her within social discourse. This implies that when a marriage fails, the woman is seen to have failed in upholding the feminine responsibility of keeping her relationship and home together. For these women, all the input they invest in a relationship comes from the need to avoid the social stigma of having failed in marriage and a need to provide a home (with father and mother figures) for their children. Arguably, this speaks to women's economically disadvantaged positions and their need to hold on to marriages, homes, partners, and families in an effort to remain supported.

Sprecher (1998) argued that the perception of investment and reward in a relationship can lead to feelings of equality or inequality. Inequality in this context can lead to feelings of under-benefiting and over-benefiting. The fear, lack of free will, and hostility of the men interviewed as narrated earlier are what Sprecher (1998) described to have emanated from feelings of under-benefiting in a relationship, which can be very subjective. As argued by Sprecher (1986; 1992; 1998), anger is a common reaction to feelings of under-benefiting in a relationship and leads to the pursuit of equality or alternative compensation for such inequity. All the men interviewed believed there was a need for the government to regulate women's use of traditional

aphrodisiacs and for increased conversations around spousal consent. However, unlike what Sprecher (1998) predicted that people who over-benefit in a relationship usually feel guilt and a desire to pursue equality, women in this context (who were considered to be ‘over-benefiting’ through the manipulation of men) did not talk about feeling guilty, but rather about surviving, and being recognised within a largely patriarchal society. Hence, it is important to highlight the subjectivity of the assessor when discussing feelings of under-benefiting or over-benefiting in a relationship. In this context, a comparative analysis of the narratives of both men and women was theorised with Sprecher’s (1998) model. While men see themselves as generally under-benefiting in these relationships, it could be a subjective assessment as most women do not see it as such but rather perceive *kayan mata* as a leveller in romantic relationships. It is important to highlight these complexities in the examination of rewards and benefits in a romantic relationship.

The perception that *kayan mata* helps to build relationship intimacy, bonds partners, and enhances commitment and loyalty further speaks to arguments highlighted by Lawrence and Byers (1992; 1995) in the Interpersonal Model of Sexual Satisfaction that sexual exchanges influence perceptions of sexual satisfaction and overall relationship satisfaction. The model argues that investment in sexual experiences in a relationship affects overall relationship experience and satisfaction.

Following the detailed discussion of women’s use of *kayan mata* in Ilorin thus far, some very vital connections became known as women described their engagement with *kayan mata*. These included that there is a nexus between food, body, and sexuality in the narratives of these women. *Kayan mata* is not just a substance that women use but was described, even though without stating it expressly, as food that affects how the body functions and how humans express sexuality. The next section discusses *kayan mata* as an element of food and unravels its connection to the body and sexuality.

4.5 THE MARKET FOR TRADITIONAL APHRODISIACS IN ILORIN: HOW DO WOMEN ACCESS KAYAN MATA?

The findings from this study revealed that social and communal networking play very crucial roles in the sourcing, sales, marketing, and use of *kayan mata* in Ilorin. While social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have become very strong avenues for marketing and sourcing *kayan mata*, the limitations around Internet access in Nigeria make communal

gatherings such as weddings, naming ceremonies, child dedications, and women's meetings more effective platforms to market and sell *kayan mata* products. Social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter do not have a wide reach to target consumers because of issues related to Internet access and use. This implies that the number of people connecting to the Internet in Nigeria vis-à-vis the population is limited due to factors associated with expensive Internet tariffs or lack of knowledge on how to surf the Internet. Internet World Stats' (2019) usage and population statistics revealed that only 59.5% of over 200 million Nigerian people have access to the Internet. This is a little over half of the population and, according to Chike Onwuegbuchi of *The Guardian* newspaper, the Minister of Communication in 2019, Mr Adebayo Shittu, noted that the challenges with Internet penetration in Nigeria are related to, among many others, high cost of access, low broadband penetration, poor Internet infrastructure, and a poor enabling environment (Onwuegbuchi 2019).

Kehinde, a seller of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, was of the opinion that communal gossip about the effects and powers of *kayan mata* is one of the most effective ways of marketing in Ilorin. In her words:

I don't know of any other place but for Ilorin, here where I sell, it is your customers who will refer people to you. Women talk a lot, especially if their relationships are like the way they desire. And truth be told, *kayan mata* is powerful and you can't just keep the wonders to yourself; you want to tell someone about the magic happening in your sex life, relationship, and home in general. One of my customers brought a lady whose husband has become a first-grade flirt. He sleeps with anything in a skirt. I sold her the bonding herb and control padlock. She told me when she brought three of her friends that she initially thought people were just unnecessarily praising *kayan mata* so she didn't have so much faith that it will work at the beginning, but after the transformation of her husband in just four weeks, she had to tell all her friends about it and bring them to buy. This is how we make sales, once you're selling original products and your customers can attest to the efficiency of what they buy from you, you will continue to make sales and get more referrals (Kehinde, 44, seller of *kayan mata*).

Mohammed-Durosinlorun (2008: 12) also reported that social networking is fundamental to the popularity of *kayan mata* in Kaduna State, Northern Nigeria. She highlighted that of the 500 respondents in her study, 'most women (52.3%) get their supply of *kayan mata* from friends while 25.4% get from family members, 17.8% from market and 3.6% from other sources.' She also mentioned that social gatherings such as weddings are platforms through which women are introduced to *kayan mata*.

4.6 KAYAN MATA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF FEMININITY

The discussion thus far has produced a very salient narrative that perceives *kayan mata* as a threat to gender roles, the normative definition of femininity, and the sanctity of the family institution. This ‘threatening’ perception has been expressed by men and married women in this study. Some of the excerpts of married women analysed in the course of this discussion bring to the fore an inherent fear of the potency of *kayan mata* in the hands of young unmarried women. They believed it could be very disastrous for marriages and families as these young women were usually labelled as ‘husband snatchers’. In addition, men have identified a newly emerging group of women they call ‘dangerous’. These women could either be married or unmarried. Their characteristics are in contrast to the normative description of femininity as they are controlling, assertive, and have turned sex into a transactional activity. Hodgson and McCurdy’s (2001) text provided a critical analysis of how women’s roles are reconfiguring gender relations on the African continent. This text, titled ‘Wicked women and the reconfiguration of gender in Africa’, critically examined how the nomenclature ‘wicked women’ is practically a description of women whose strategies, initiatives, and ideology are transformational for the normative gender relations of African social life. Irrespective of the name they are called (wicked, dangerous, abusive, disrespectful), ‘their lives and actions often reflect and produce contradictions of power within the intersecting and shifting landscapes of the individual, family, community, nation-state, and global arena’ (Hodgson and McCurdy 2001: 2). The narratives of dangerous women explored in this chapter are a contribution to the body of literature that critically examines how women across Africa, individually or collectively, remark the boundaries of what is regarded as ‘acceptable’ behaviours, and highlight the complexities of normative behaviours and sometimes reorder gender relations of power.

Considering the diverse opinions of what is feminine, or rather what is expected of women as regards her sexuality, in the context of this research, it became very important to examine the various descriptions of ‘feminine’ as they emerged from the study participants. It is important to note that the perception of femininity within this context is becoming fluid and explicitly distinct from the traditional definition. This is because the way women who use *kayan mata* are perceived (dangerous, controlling, and assertive) negates the hegemonic norm of femininity. Usually, hierarchies within femininities are primarily determined by their proximity to hegemonic masculinity (Thakkilapati 2019). However, Schippers (2007) shed more light on

femininity and identified three categories; the first, hegemonic femininity, is characterised by those qualities considered as normative for women that validate males' privileged position and women's subordination. The second category, pariah femininity, encompasses women – or better still, biologically female persons – who admire and act out features of hegemonic masculinity such as desiring other females and enhancing physical strength and authority. Thirdly, alternative femininity incorporates the actions of women who reject the idealisation of relations of domination and subordination among gender categories.

The participants in this study argued that what it means to be a woman is no longer static but dynamic instead. Hence, normative gender constructions are becoming less descriptive of reality because of the constant changes that beset traditional binary constructions of gender roles. Women's contest to power, especially within societies that normalise domesticating women's roles, is perceived as unusual and as challenging cultural values. Likewise, in romantic relationships, women are expected to respect their male partner and remain completely submissive and must not challenge this normative hierarchy of patriarchal social structure that privileges men. Both the male and female participants interviewed in this study mentioned that gender normativity and hierarchies of power have become highly challenged with women's use of *kayan mata*; hence, they described the emergence of various groups of women. Some categories of women identified, and the attributes used to describe them, are discussed below.

4.6.1 Controlling women

The idea that the use of *kayan mata* is altering the conception of what defines 'a woman' is quite compelling and was mostly shared by men. For instance, women are seen as becoming more assertive and less submissive, more controlling and no longer controllable, and women now use *kayan mata* to hypnotise and gain sexual, social, and economic advantages over men. A seller of *kayan mata*, Kehinde, mentioned that 'women use *kayan mata* to cage their husbands, so they can control them'. Bola also attested to the fact that she used *kayan mata* to control her husband. She said the following:

I use *kayan mata* to be a very important woman in my home and to my husband. It makes you very powerful. So, we both agree on what we want to do together, not that somebody will now I say I must do what he wants by fire or force. In fact, it is that one that I want that he will do and there is nothing he can do about it. This makes us live in peace, ooh, because no one is feeling left out. What used to happen before is that he will just take decisions like that without informing me even if it is

me the things will affect. But now that I am wise and I have found a solution to my problem, all those types of things don't happen again. Our people used to say a child that has been predestined to die after every birth [*abiku*] will also make the parent skilful in the act of burying. Men are very stubborn and if we are not as tough as women, they will continue to ride us like they used to (Bola, 33, female, married, two children).

Bola's story describes *kayan mata* as a very important tool for women to exercise power and control in their relationships. In addition, it is a leveller that gives men and women an opportunity to engage equally in decision-making processes within the intimate familial terrain. Closely related to the narrative that *kayan mata* advances permissive sexual behaviour and waters down the moral confines of sexual regulation is the idea that some women now use sex as a tool to gain economic rewards. Away from the traditional norms within the study location that consider sex sacred and as an activity for procreation and pleasure within marriages is the notion that *kayan mata* aids women to use sex as a transactional tool to attain an economic end.

4.6.2 Sexually entrepreneurial women

The perception that *kayan mata* is breeding dangerous women narrated by most men is also connected to the transactional nature of sex. There are several debates in the literature about the definition of transactional sex. This follows a need to carefully distinguish between sex work and transactional or casual sex. Generally, transactional sex is operationalised as the exchange of sex for money or gifts (Luke et al. 2011; Stoebenau et al. 2016). A more detailed and unique definition of transactional sex was provided by Wamoyi et al. (2019: 368) as 'noncommercial, non-marital sexual relationships motivated by an implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material support or other benefits'. This definition is more encompassing and concise but does not necessarily capture the narratives of this study. The definition as it stands fits the category described as 'dangerous' single women who are believed to use *kayan mata* to extort money from men. Moreover, as argued earlier, some married women also rely on *kayan mata* to gain monetary rewards and other gifts from their husbands. This therefore implies that a common factor to the transactional nature of sex in the use of *kayan mata* is the fact that it is motivated by a need to gain monetary rewards or other benefits. This further substantiates the thought shared by most women in this study that the stimulation of sex with *kayan mata* has become a tool for negotiating economic and social resources within intimate relationships and families.

Furthermore, the impact of the women referred to as dangerous is multi-phased and threatening to male hegemony as described by the participants. However, it is important to highlight that viewing women as ‘sexual entrepreneurs’ is a narrative that was commonly used to describe single unmarried women who get into romantic/sexual relationships with older and wealthy men for the sake of financial and social status reward. The social exchange theory therefore becomes very relevant in understanding the complexities and dynamics of these ‘rewarding relationships’. Alex had the following to say about women’s use of *kayan mata*, its danger to men, and the transactional nature of sex:

They say as the world is changing, we’re also changing with it but we must be careful not to now start thinking that all of these changes are good. We must resist some of them and fight some of these changes. We can’t let some things come to stay. *Kayan mata* is now very popular and it is causing a lot of trouble. Like I told you before, it is not a bad thing if married women only use it to make their husbands love them and take care of their children but that is not the case, my brother. These women want to use it to control us as men, they want to turn you into something, they can turn to anywhere they want at any time. Because they know we love sex as men, they now want to use it to get us. And this is terrible, trust me. God created sex for us to have children and enjoy ourselves, not that some people should use it to be tying people down. It is powerful. Me, I am a spiritual man and I know the implication of a woman tying you down with sex, and you cannot get out of it except if she releases you. And the most fearful one is these young girls out there who use these *kayan mata* things on men; so they target their client to be a rich man who most times is married. They will collect all the money in your hand and you won’t even remember your family. See what we’re going through, my brother, all because we as men cannot put our penis in our pants [laughs] (Alex, 38, male, married, three children).

Further corroborating this, Salami explained how women he referred to as ‘sexual entrepreneurs’ used *kayan mata* to collect money from men and have tainted the noble creation by God, namely sex. He explained as follows:

It is highly unbelievable that there are women who have destroyed the sacred creation of God. Sex is very honourable and spiritual. God made it so we can continue to have children and for enjoyment in marriage. You can now imagine this generation with women who use sex as a tool to get whatever they want. You hear them say things like, use what you have to get what you want. Should we be proud of that as a people? If not that, we do not have morals and the fear of God anymore. These girls use these things called *kayan mata* and have destroyed many homes. They sell their bodies, sell sex, and they are not ashamed. It is becoming too popular. I currently know of like five men who have baby mamas and their families are not aware. There is this very unthinkable case, the man bought the girl a house and he is sponsoring her foreign trip while his kids at home are struggling to pay school fees. This is the reality we are confronted with and it is very sad. What type of world do you think my own children will grow up in when at this

stage people don't fear God anymore? You don't even have to toast these women. When they like you and see that you have all the things, they want especially money, they can use those things for you and you will fall in love and start doing things you never imagined you could do. We have to be very careful as men not to fall into the trap of these women. It is dangerous, my brother (Salami, 45, male, married, seven children).

Iya-Ibeji corroborated Alex and Salami's opinions when she mentioned that the sexual enhancement influence of *kayan mata* is usually connected to achieving other ends within intimate relationships. Such ends are usually connected to taking control of the home, especially a man's finances. She stated the following:

Kayan mata is used basically for making man and woman enjoy sex very well. But it is more of the woman thing. It performs several other functions, but everything starts with the man enjoying the sex. If a woman uses *kayan mata* products, the husband will like it very much, give her everything she wants and even the ones she did not ask for. If the man wins a big contract, he will give the woman a larger percentage of the profit. It is that serious, so I understand when people say women are using it to collect money from men. Some men will even go and sell their property just to satisfy the woman, especially if she used command key or control padlock on you. Favour sets also work like that. Men will just like the woman and want to give her things that will make her happy. That's why married women now complain that young girls are using it to snatch their husbands and making them abandon home. Personally, I only advise married women to use it but what will I do as a businesswoman, I sell to these young girls, and they pay more [laughs] (Iya-Ibeji, 53, married, seller of *kayan mata*).

Abiye also mentioned that both married and unmarried women were complicit in the use of *kayan mata* to leverage economic advantages in intimate relationships. She narrated:

Me, I don't like when people talk as if it is only run girls that use *kayan mata* to collect money from men. What about the married women who do the same thing? What makes them different? I have married customers who will tell me jokingly to please make sure that the products I'm selling to them have extra spice because they know their husband is expecting some money and they want their share to be very big. So both run girls and married women use these things to make men spend on them. Or which woman does not like to be pampered and spoiled with gifts and money? We all do, including me. I use my products very well. Otherwise, how will I know the result if I am not also testing it? (Abiye, 42, married, seller of *kayan mata*).

Interestingly, some married women confirmed this narrative that the use of *kayan mata* facilitated economic rewards. Zainab captured this in her narrative when she said:

Kayan mata is essential for sexual stimulation but through the stimulation of sex, the needs and desires of the woman become the heart cry of the man. He will constantly strive to meet her demands (Zainab, 30, female, married, two children).

The emphasis on ‘he will strive to meet her demands’ is resounding and emphasises that, as earlier argued, the desire to gain economic and social rewards is a common attribute of *kayan mata* users. Yetunde mentioned that the financial rewards that come with the use of *kayan mata* are quite amazing. She said:

Whenever I use *kayan mata*, my husband pays a lot [laughs], if you know what I mean. As long as he has money, he will give me any amount I ask for without hesitation (Yetunde, 32, female, married, three children).

This becomes more engaging as Hajara gave a detailed account of how she used *kayan mata* to collect money from rich and usually married men.

Hajara is a young unmarried woman in her early 20s who used *kayan mata* as a tool to gain great economic rewards and social privileges from men. Her perception of empowerment and the use of *kayan mata* is that it could be used by women to get whatever they desire from men, especially money. This brings to context the arguments of social exchange theorists such as Sprecher (1998; 1992; 1986) and Rusbult (1980) that sexual exchanges in intimate relationships can be likened to an economic process that takes cognisance of cost (investments) and rewards. She mentioned that she had been using it for over three years to collect money from men and she was very proud of it because it had changed her life completely. Hajara described *kayan mata* as the pivotal point of her economic hustle; it had become a means to a glorious financial end and a lucrative lifestyle. She narrated:

See, my dear, the little secret of my life is wrapped up in *kayan mata*. It has changed my life. Before now, it was very difficult for me to take care of myself, not to mention sending money to my mother or siblings. But now everything is overflowing [smiles coyly]. Some people call me run girl, blah blah blah, but I don’t care. I am a big girl who understands the system. As a woman, nobody is ready to help you; you’ll suffer in this city if you don’t wise up. I know how many years I used to beg people up and down. In fact, some of them will sleep with you, promise you heaven and earth, and will still not help you. But since I started using *kayan mata*, I have not seen that man that will say he’s stubborn and his hand will not open, before I ask, he will do what I want. *Kayan mata* is my own machine. Ooh, it is what I am using for my life and I am not shy to admit it to you. Let people say whatever they want to say because they will not feed you when you’re hungry (Hajara, 25, female, single).

Hajara is a beautiful young woman and despite her beauty, relied on *kayan mata* to get men’s attention and to get them to remain financially committed to her. Some of the assets she had acquired within three years of using *kayan mata* included a car, a three-bedroom apartment in the centre of the city, and a big, luxurious boutique. She mentioned that the use of *kayan mata*

by young ladies as a means to economic freedom has become the latest business in town and it was growing sporadically. The use of various *kayan mata* products in this context as described by Hajara could be equated to the investments (costs) made in a relationship for an expected reward, namely financial and social status. Hajara further explained:

Kayan mata helps me get wealthy partners who can afford anything I want. I don't know how that happens, ooh, but I just don't meet stupid people or people who can't feed themselves, not to mention feeding me. All I do is spray the perfume, drink some tea, and use the other products as instructed. And anything I ask from my partner is mine. I must also tell you that these magic-working products are very expensive and are not as cheap as the ones that just makes men enjoy sex. These things are in categories and there are so many fake ones now (Hajara, 25, female, single).

Hajara's story is a vivid account of the reasons why young women who use *kayan mata* in Ilorin are stigmatised. They are labelled 'husband snatchers' and 'family destroyers.' While recruiting participants for this study, it was very difficult to get young unmarried women to participate. The few that took part in the study noted that young unmarried women did not publicly identify with *kayan mata* because of the stigma that followed any unmarried woman who used traditional aphrodisiacs such as *kayan mata*. Shade narrated her ordeal with an elderly woman who saw her buying *kayan mata*:

About two years ago, I went to pick up an order from my supplier. Unfortunately, I got there when another elderly woman came for her order. She asked if I was married and I said no, and she started interrogating me about why I'm using *kayan mata*. I told her I am in a serious relationship and *kayan mata* has helped me and my partner, as well as our relationship. She went on preaching and telling me *kayan mata* is not for the unmarried, that it is a secret recipe specially made by God for marriages. She told me that in case I am not aware, any unmarried person using *kayan mata* is a prostitute and that is what the people think of her. She reminded me that most people believe an unmarried person patronising *kayan mata* sellers is promiscuous and uses the product to extort money and resources from married men and men in general. She said she would not be surprised if I am one of such girls who sell their body for money and end up causing havoc in families. While she made it sound like advice, I was embarrassed, and it reminded me of what people really think of me as a young girl using *kayan mata*. Trust me, there are so many young women who are not married out there using *kayan mata* but we are very secretive about it. I am also aware that some of these ladies who use *kayan mata* to brainwash and collect money from men do not care about any stigma and are not hiding it from the public (Shade, 25, female, single).

This was quite important in understanding why most of the single women who had shown interest in the study at the beginning suddenly cancelled before the appointed date of the interview. It helps to re-examine some of these stigmas and to thoughtfully reflect on other

aspects of the study to understand how *kayan mata* is perceived and how it operates within Ilorin. As highlighted in some of the discussions presented earlier in this chapter, several participants believed that *kayan mata* was dangerous and could have serious implications when young unmarried women use it. It is also important to note that, as discovered from the participants' narratives, the motivation for transactional or casual sex as the case may be might not be borne out of explicit intent to gain financial rewards but could also be a sole option for survival and sustenance. Hajara earlier in this discussion narrated how the harsh socio-economic conditions of the country had pushed her into using *kayan mata* on men as a means to survive and fend for her family. Stoebe et al. (2016) noted this in their article when they argued that women often practise transactional sex because of the unequal gender systems within society that have kept women almost completely economically dependent on men and have ceded their agency within relationships. Furthermore, the notion that sex is more transactional coupled with the hypnotic concerns of *kayan mata* raised issues regarding the stability of the family institution for some participants.

The narratives discussed thus far bring to the fore the arguments of social exchange theorists that socio-economic exchanges play an active role in intimate relationships (investments, costs, rewards, benefits). Moreover, the motivation for women's participation in transactional sexual relationships cannot be generalised, since there could be factors beyond economic reasons that influence their decision. However, certain factors have been highlighted as fundamental. These factors include the desire to meet basic survival needs in impoverished settings, attempts to improve social status, and the expectation that men ought to provide for their partners in relationships (Chatterji et al. 2005; Wamoyi et al. 2011). Interestingly, women in this study generally used *kayan mata* to stimulate sex, to gain financial resources from men, and to negotiate power within intimate relationships or family. Of importance is the use of sex as a tool for negotiating power. While normative gender role expectations fuel notions that see men as providers and drivers of both the home and relationships, it is becoming more popular for women to challenge such stereotypical norms. Relationship power dynamics are constantly challenged, and women are beginning to draw on various approaches to claim agency, negotiate historical patriarchal spaces, and challenge hegemonic male privileges. *Kayan mata* is therefore an important tool that is used by women to achieve these ends in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria.

4.7 UNDERSTANDING THE NEXUS BETWEEN FOOD, BODY, AND SEXUALITY

The findings of this research bring to the fore the intersection between food, the body, and sexuality. The narratives of the participants in the study revealed that the need to make the body more sexually appealing, seductive, and enduring is enhanced through the consumption of certain food items. This desire to enhance sexual wellness and to maintain the beauty of the body as a medium of expressing their sexuality cuts across gender.

4.7.1 Food and sexuality

Food and sexuality are closely linked. As food is important to human sustenance, sexuality is very essential for human existence and procreation. As described by Andrievskikh (2014: 137),

throughout cultures [across various cultural groups] and epochs, metaphors of consumption act as a major symbolic vehicle to both convey and shape concepts of sexuality, agency, and gender identity. In literary and popular contexts, appetite often stands for sexual desire, descriptions of eating mask language of possession, and representation of cooking express both enslavement and empowerment.

Andrievskikh (2014) described how it is important to examine the desire for food and consumption beyond the boundaries of satisfying hunger to reflecting on how it shapes and unearths sexual desires and aspects of our sexual being as humans. This section examines how food forms a vital aspect of expressing desire, intimacy, and eroticism, and giving sexual pleasure as emanating from the findings of this research. Food is one of the most important avenues to enhance and recover sexual virility through the ages across cultures in Nigeria (Agunbiade and Ayotunde 2012). It is used to initiate, entice, and lure people into sex. Most *kayan mata* products identified in this research require oral consumption. In fact, the sellers believe these products (eaten or sprayed) are only useable because they are extracted from herbs and natural substances that are edible by humans, such as seeds, plants, roots, and animal parts.

Anatu mentioned that women are coming to the realisation that

you do not need to use *juju* to make your partner faithful or stop him from chasing after other women. God has given us all that we need in plants and fruits. *Kayan mata*, in general, is made with these natural things, not *juju*. The type of food we eat helps us to be very good in bed and affects our body. If you know some of these

things, you won't have all these problems of not enjoying the thing [sexual intercourse]. And even while I was growing up, my mother used to take some things, I didn't understand why until I was grown up. You know, they won't tell you these things because you're a girl. I can't imagine my mother or anyone in my house telling me they eat certain fruits because they want to improve themselves in bed and other areas like having children. The only thing they will tell you is to never talk to boys because you will get pregnant. So when I got into the College of Education, I started listening to friends and we talked about these things. That was when I knew that when you blend certain fruits together, it helps you to be very fertile and sweet in bed as a woman. Tiger nut, bananas, and peaches mixed are actually very good for a woman. There are so many of these fruits that can be mixed together to achieve a different purpose and that is what these *kayan mata* sellers do. Me, I don't know of people that say *kayan mata* is *juju* but let's be sincere with ourselves, if you can give your man good sex, he will listen to you. Men love this thing [sex] and will be very obedient when they know you give it to them well [laughs] (Anatu, 46, married, four children).

Anatu's narrative is a description of how food initiates sexual acts and enhances sexual virility. It also brings to the fore the notion that sexual discussion does not constitute a popular debate within most homes as it is often ignored and not talked about. Most of the things she knew about how to enhance her sex life were learned from friends. She gave an example of the fact that instead of parents and adults engaging them in issues relating to sex, they were told as young girls to stay away from boys who had the power to get them pregnant. These are quite interesting as the narrative of Kazim that is presented below not only reiterates the relationship between food and sexuality but also shows a distinction in the way the sexuality of boys and girls are constructed.

Kazim's narrative of the importance of sexual stimulation brings to light the nexus between food, body, and sexuality. He described it as follows:

You see, women, they have their own things to make us enjoy sex, we also have to prepare to make sure they are enjoying the sex with us. If you cannot make your woman enjoy that thing [sexual intercourse], then she can go after other men to get it. As a man, when we started reaching the age of an adult, your uncles and brothers will begin to tell you the things to eat and the things not to eat. For example, they will say something like, "Ah, you're eating sugar, your thing [penis] will not work, all the girls will leave you." I did not understand why they always told me this when they saw me putting plenty of sugar in *garri* [staple food made from cassava], so I asked my older brother and he told me that as a man you have to eat some types of food. These foods will make you strong and make you last during sex. He said sugar and sweet things do not allow you to perform well as a man. He now tells me about different *agbo* [aphrodisiacs made from roots and herbs] that a man can be taking to help him perform well as a man. If you are not good in that place [sexual virility], then you're not supposed to be a man. These things are not about women, it is about all of us. Just that this *kayan mata* thing is original from the north but

our women here to have their own. But we know the *kayan mata* is more powerful than the ones our women use here and we men too have started using the ones from the north. Now I use this one called *bura tashi* [penis awakening] and it is very good. I used to fire nonstop when I use it and my women enjoy it. How do I survive satisfying three wives if I don't use these things, my brother? [laughs coyly] (Kazim, 48, married, three children).

From Kazim's story, it is clear how from a very young age boys are taught to embrace their sexuality and build themselves to be virile, agile, and sexually appealing. This story differs from that of Anatu that was presented earlier. It does not just bring to light the nexus between food and sexuality, but further narrates how masculinity is constructed and reproduced within our social milieu. The construction of male sexuality as described above values and prioritises sexual virility. Interestingly, this virility is described as a vital part of masculinity. Therefore, the view is that you are not fit to be a man if you cannot sexually satisfy a woman. The normative construction of male masculinity as described by Kazim embraces strength, vigour, and unrestricted show of these strengths by having several women as sex partners. Hence, boys can embrace their sexuality and in fact are encouraged to consciously or unconsciously develop it in line with their masculinity, but girls are not allowed to explore these aspects of their being.

In addition, Tiemoko (2008) mentioned that sexual pleasure is arguably linked to the types of food our body is fed and this is indirectly influenced by our sexual desire. This implies that the food we consume as an individual is directly or indirectly influenced by our sexual desire or, in other words, the drive to enhance our sexual virility. Equally, our physical appearance, texture, and the functioning of our body are not only affected by nutrition but also by sensuality and sexuality.

Tiemoko (2008) further identified two aspects of food and sexuality that are popular across African cultures. He noted that the nexus between food and sexuality in Africa is perceived from a gendered narrative. It is therefore believed that men use aphrodisiacs and women use love potions. However, while men use aphrodisiacs to enhance sexual virility such as to enhance performance and pleasure, women also use aphrodisiacs such as *kayan mata*. The irony in this nexus is that the aphrodisiacs used by women are often regarded as a love potion or *juju*. Interestingly, the religious discourse on God is used to justify the positives of *kayan mata* in contradiction to the negatives they call *juju*. These love potions or *juju* are believed to be used by women to entice and hypnotise men to love them. While there are several debates about the pharmacological efficacy of these aphrodisiacs, it points to the fact that certain foods form an integral part of sexuality and sexual culture in many cultures across Nigeria.

Food is discussed in this section as not just an act of satisfying hunger or as rudimentary for survival, but as a medium of expressing sexuality. Moreover, the food we consume most times is deeply rooted in our sensual desires. While this section unpacks the relationship between food and sexuality, it is important to note that the motivation for using various food items and delicacies as mediums of expressing sexuality varies across context, culture, and people. As already suggested, the use of *kayan mata* was originally largely for marriages in Northern Nigeria, but now various women beyond the Northern Region draw on these traditional aphrodisiacs to attain diverse ends. Some believe in and use *kayan mata* just for sexual stimulation, while some explore its efficacy beyond that⁸. The next discussion chapter will broaden debates on other functions of *kayan mata* and will bring to the fore women's narratives that establish that *kayan mata* is a mechanism for attaining a position of power, influence, and control in the intimate familial terrain. It also became interesting to examine how younger women use *kayan mata* as a medium to extort resources from men. The next section discusses the relationship between body image and sexuality.

4.7.2 Body decorations and sexuality

Another important aspect of *kayan mata* is the products that are painted on various parts of the body. The participants described these paintings and drawings as a very important aspect of the ritual for marriage. As such, it is a significant aspect of understanding women's expression of sexuality. I sought to understand how these paintings and body ornaments influence women's perception of their sexuality and how they shape their sexual agency within an intimate relationship. This discussion unveiled that there are some types of *kayan mata* that are applied to the body by drawing various symbols and images that signify different things and communicate various messages.

Tassie (2003) noted that Africans have ancient practices for accessorising and beautifying their bodies in varying rich ways. For example, designs such as dots around the forehead of the Shilluk people of Sudan signify a person's tribal heritage (Butt 2017). What is quite interesting about the narratives of women in this study is that *kayan mata* is not just an act of sexual stimulation, it is a culture. It is a broad description of cultural practices, processes, substances, and procedures that are used by Northern Nigerian women to enhance their sexuality. *Kayan mata* is embedded in the ways of life of these women and it is manifested through varying

⁸ The issues emanating from the use of *kayan mata* will be unpacked in depth in the next chapter.

practices. Drawing the link between body image and sexuality as emanating from the stories of these women will open up a new aspect of *kayan mata*. At this point, reference is made to the definition provided earlier that *kayan mata*, literally translated, means the luggage of the woman. Within this cultural context, this ‘luggage’ entails everything that is believed to be what the woman needs to be a good wife and mother within her home. It was during the conversations with these women that I discovered that various aspects of body ornaments encompass these ‘needs’ and include scarification, body painting, beadwork, and jewellery – all of which form an important part of *kayan mata* as an aphrodisiac.

4.7.2.1 Scarification of body parts

Scarification involves intentionally cutting off the skin in a decorative style that permanently scars a particular body part. This can be in the form of grooves cut down in the skin or welts that stick up above the skin in an elegant manner. This practice is prevalent in cultures across Nigeria, Chad, Zaire, and Ethiopia (Ayeni, Ayeni and Jackson 2007). These scarred ornaments signify very important events in a person’s life, such as the attainment of puberty or childbirth. Aisha’s narration of these processes fully describes how scarification forms a vital aspect of the *kayan mata* culture in Northern Nigeria. She mentioned:

I got to know *kayan mata* as a young girl during my service in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria. This was about eight years ago. I made new friends and most of them are Hausas. When my boyfriend became a serious pain with his behaviour and started sleeping around, I was so broken and destabilised that my newly found friends decided to introduce me to something they called *kayan mata*. When I was given this thing, they asked that I mix the substance with beverages about two hours before seeing him. After we had sex that day, things never remained the same. He became very loving and scarily caring... [laughs]. That was when I knew these things are not a joke, ooh, and this *kayan mata* thing works wonders. My mind was so on the thing that I wanted more and more. I started asking questions, I wanted to know more. In fact, it was at this point they told me it is something of culture for them and every young girl when preparing for marriage will be taught some of these things. They showed me different types and showed me some parts of their bodies [navel] that were permanently scarred, pierced nose with rings, and all. I was very confused. Me, I do not understand how cutting your body means anything until they explained that to them, they have this belief that as a woman, these cuttings and scars make you attractive to a man. It is a symbol in the culture that means that you’re very fine and sexy to the man. The more men see these things, the more they desire you and want you as their wife (Aisha, 28, female, single).

From Aisha’s story, it is believed that scarification among these women plays a role in gender identity and sexual expression. These scars are considered as beautiful elements of attraction

that beautify the physical appearance and are erotic in their sensual connection. These scars represent symbols that carry various meanings within a culture. Archaeological discoveries have made a link between artefacts with these markings and some practices across some cultures in modern Africa (Ayeni et al. 2007). This means that the practice of scarification dates hundreds and thousands of years back. According to Felsenstein (2014: 1), it is believed that these scars 'enhance one's features and make one more appealing to the opposite sex; the etched markings indicating a sort of increased sexual viability through one's willingness to tolerate hardship and pain, a striking robustness conducive to being a good mate and parent'. In fact, Pitts (2003) noted that some cultures believe that many scars are an indication of bravery and signify that the woman can withstand the pain of childbirth. Conversely, those people without scars are believed to be weak, less sexually appealing, and cowards (Roman 2016). To women in Northern Nigeria, it is part of the sexual culture and an important part of aphrodisiac practices when attaining puberty and in preparation for marriage. It is intended to enhance a young woman's sexual outlook as she attains puberty and prepares to embrace womanhood. The practice of scarification carries various cultural significance and mean different things for varying genders. From the story above, it implies beauty, bravery, and strength, and signifies fertility for a woman.

Moreover, scholars have also reviewed the practice of scarification and advanced arguments that describe the practice as actual or grievous bodily harm, an involuntary marking and denial of personhood, and a mutilating, self-harming, and self-objectifying process (Pitts 2003; Schildkrout 2004; Oultram 2009). In the context of this study, this was not specifically investigated, and the narratives of the participants did not allude to or discard these concerns.

4.7.2.2 The use of body paint for expressing sexuality

Body painting is a colourful art that is practised across several African cultures and is usually used to celebrate, mourn, protect, and express sexuality. This emerged as one of the very popular ways of expressing sexuality and a fundamental aspect of *kayan mata* culture. Someone without much knowledge of the culture in this region, especially as it has diffused with that of Northern Nigeria, will think that these body paints are just for decoration, but they are not just for decorative purposes. Ronke, who has lived in Ilorin for 15 years but is originally from Sokoto, a core Northern Nigerian state, explained how body painting is a significant aspect of *kayan mata*.

She narrated:

I am from Sokoto, but I got married to a man from Ilorin and I have been living here for about 15 years. When I wear my paintings some years ago, so many people think it's just for fashion, but it is more than that for me. These body paintings are part of the sexual culture of the north. It is part of *kayan mata* culture. *Kayan mata* itself is literally translated as the woman's belongings. What we mean is the accessories the woman uses to make her home [sexual and otherwise] memorable. So, when we talk of *kayan mata*, this is a very important part of it. We wear these different body paints to commensurate our sexual aura as a woman during a wedding, after menstruation, or after childbirth. These paintings are drawn from herb substances that have the ability to stimulate sex in both the man and woman. The beauty of the drawing draws the man to the woman and the effect of those paintings makes him desire sex with you. Now, you see, body painting is becoming very popular in Ilorin, especially among young girls. It used to be a sacred culture among the Hausa/Fulani people, but it has recently become what these young girls use to lure men into bed (Ronke, 37, female, married, four children).

From the story above, it is clear that body paintings are cultural rituals that are believed to initiate sex between partners. They are also a very important part of the marriage rites of a young woman in Northern Nigeria. These paints are usually made from mixed herbs and natural substances and then smoothened onto the skin with the finger, grasses, or a stick. Parts of the ingredients used in this exercise include oil, clay, and chalk. Interestingly, some other cultures across Africa also practise this; the Dimka people of Southern Sudan use ash, cattle dung, and urine to make their face paint (Butt 2017). It is important to note that these paintings have been culturally designed to mean and signify different things. Various colours are used to signify the different stages of a person's life, such as puberty, courting, and marriage. The Berber culture in North Africa also has the practice of painting women's feet and hands called *siyala* to celebrate their weddings (Becker 2006).

Contextually, body decoration among women in Northern Nigeria could be for religious or traditional ceremonies, to enhance beauty, and for aesthetics. It usually speaks about beauty and an indication of title, age, social status, and membership of a referenced group within society. These decorations are seen on some parts of the face, hand, nose, and fingers, among others. For example, the Kanuris of Borno State beautify their bodies through hair treatment, skin cleansing, and generally body makeup that is called henna art (Al-Amin et al. 2006). A picture of these henna body decorations from one of the participants in this study is presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: A henna body decoration



Source: Researcher's fieldwork compilation (2019)

The henna painting above was designed in preparation for a wedding. Shrub leaves are usually used to make henna art. Part of these leaves are blended to form an orange-red dye used to stain the fingernails, the top of the fingers, the chest, feet, and hair, and to dye the beards of men. This dye is very common in Northern Nigeria and some parts of the south among women. It is usually used during the pre-wedding ceremony – ‘the night of henna’. Ronke further noted:

Nupe women, for instance, in the North and around some part of Kwara State rub this dye over various parts of their body in preparation for marriage to signify, beauty, fertility and to make the woman sexually desirable to the man.

4.7.2.3 Understanding the roles of jewellery in the expression of sexuality

Jewellery is very popular among men and women across Africa. They are worn for different reasons, and these pieces of jewellery include bracelets, anklets, earrings, nose rings, necklaces, and tongue rings, among others. These jewellery items serve as an ornament, for sexuality expression and protective functions. While explaining how it forms a part of *kayan mata*, Ronke further mentioned:

... you see, aside from these body paintings, jewellery performs another magic. We value jewellery a lot and it is believed that these jewelleries beautify a woman. From a very tender age, you will see young girls begin to save for various types of jewellery that they will wear when they come of age. I have heard this before, even from my mom, that some of these jewellery items are very powerful *kayan mata* products. For example, I know there is this one that some women put around their private part, there is the nose ring and the tongue ring. Some of this jewellery is specially prepared to keep a man committed to the woman. Tongue rings, especially in the north, are believed to be a very powerful way to sexually connect

to a man. The ring you see on my nose was given to me by my mother the week of my wedding. She told me to always have it on me because it will continually make my husband appreciate me and see me as beautiful. There is this *kayan mata* product called control ring that women now use to make men very obedient. We have the fertility ring that is more like a family planning thing. For you to know how important the jewellery is, they are part of the most expensive types of *kayan mata* because they are not like other ones that serve a general purpose. They are specially prepared for specific purposes and it works... It works very well. Let me advise you, don't bet with anyone on your partner with *kayan mata* jewellery; you will lose. It is a very powerful medium to hold men down. They will become like your puppet, doing everything you ask them to do (Ronke, 37, female, married, four children).

Ronke explained above how *kayan mata* jewellery not only stimulates sex and makes women very attractive but also gives her the power to control a man. These narratives expose the notion of power and agency, that will be further discussed in this thesis, and how they constitute a major issue in the contemporary debate on traditional aphrodisiacs in Nigeria.

4.7.2.4 The use of beads in the expression of sexuality

Yetunde married at a very young age and narrated how she came into contact with *kayan mata* and the role it has played in her relationship. She narrated:

I have been married for about 10 years; however, after I had my third child, I discovered our sexual life was not like before. I was young and naïve, this is the only man I have been with and now how do I explain not enjoying sex again with my husband at such a young age. I didn't know if I was the problem or something else about our relationship was affecting us. I struggled with this for several months and couldn't bear the pain anymore. My husband wouldn't even touch me because it felt like he has lost interest in me. I discussed it with a couple of friends and they introduced me to *kayan mata*. I used them, and they worked perfectly; however, when my husband found out, he was very angry, and he accused me of being a fetishist and using a love potion on him. After we settled this quarrel, I told the seller I can no longer continue to use *kayan mata* for the safety of my marriage. I remember that lady asked if my husband adores jewellery and I said yes. In fact, he loves them. That was how she told me she has a solution to my problem. She told me about these special waist beads that are designed for a different purpose – love stimulation, sexual enhancement, and family planning. She gave me some that were so beautiful but trust me, powerful [laughs]. I have never seen my husband that loving and caring. The man desires me and is always wanting more of me. I have been using these beads for almost four years and trust me, I have never had any problem. I change them from time to time and it's been amazing (Yetunde, 32, female, married, three children).

From Yetunde's story, it is important to note that sexual stimulation and *kayan mata* culture span through various body beautification practices. It also highlights how women's use of

aphrodisiacs might raise issues in their relationships. Yetunde described her husband's disapproval as threatening to her marriage but she was still keenly interested in enhancing her relationship. Women's adoption of mutually benefitting strategies in dealing with their partners is a fundamental point that was shared by several participants. In a conversation with Toro, she was asked what her partner would think if he knew she was using *kayan mata*; her response was quite striking as she opened up a backdoor strategy that most women use. Toro mentioned:

You see, the thing about *kayan mata* is that you have to know your man. It is not a new thing that these people [men and society] tag us as witches and they think women use love potions. Let me tell you something, when people see that a marriage is peaceful and the man listens to the advice of his wife, they will begin to say things like that woman is a witch, she has made her husband irrelevant in the home, she's the one making all the decisions. So as a woman you need to be smart in the way you handle these things. If the one you want to use is the powder type, you can mix it with a cool juice and give him, you can also use it to prepare his favourite food. You can't make it obvious (Toro, 38, female, married, five children).

From the narratives of both Yetunde and Toro, women are usually very cautious in their approach when using *kayan mata* because of the preconceived thoughts of society about women who use such aphrodisiacs. In addition, the use of beads is popular across Africa and other cultures in the different regions of Nigeria. It could represent symbols of beauty, fertility, reproduction, and class. Women in some parts of Nigeria wear beads made of different designs to signify that they had attained puberty, among others (Oloruntoba-Oju 2007). Royal members wear certain types of beads to reflect their social status and to command respect from society. Wives wear beads around their waist as a sign of expressing fertile reproductive strength. More recently, beadwork for men and women have become sought after by tourists in Africa (Oloruntoba-Oju 2007).

Following the discussion of the various practices of decoration, there are, however, competing arguments in the literature about the effect and motivation of body decoration on women, their arousal, desire, and orgasm. Quinn-Nilas et al. (2016) argued that while a woman's thought of another person desiring and admiring her body could enhance sexual desire, over-reliance on this self-consciousness and validation of her beauty from others could have a negative consequence for her sexual agency. The implication is that her own desire might decrease, as might the quality of her orgasm, which could have become dependent on desirability from her partner. The implications of this process for sexual behaviour have been extensively debated

in the literature (Pascoal, Narciso and Pereira 2012; Dosch, Ghisletta and Van der Linden 2016).

These body decorative practices hold strong and sentimental values across cultures but, more importantly, they are very significant for sexuality expression in Northern Nigeria and they have spread to Ilorin, especially among young girls who use their hypnotic abilities to entice men.

4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an introduction to the world of traditional aphrodisiacs generically referred to as *kayan mata* among women in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. Engaging the participants provided insight into how *kayan mata* is used, what it signifies among women, its influence on the perception of femininity, as well as its connection to food and body beautification. A critical discussion of the perceptions of men about women who use *kayan mata* was also presented.

In the first part of this chapter, it was seen that *kayan mata* is a name for various traditional aphrodisiacs that women use, and the name originated from Northern Nigeria among the Hausa/Fulani people. *Kayan mata* is a popular traditional aphrodisiac commonly used by women in Northern Nigeria; however, it has become a very popular traditional sexual stimulant in Nigeria that has spread to other parts of the country because of cultural exchanges, migration, and other eminent aspects of globalisation such as social media. The movement of people across different parts of the country has facilitated cultural exchange, and *kayan mata* has become one of the most thriving practices among women. Furthermore, most female participants in the study described *kayan mata* as a popular secret of women's sexual prowess. This implies that, while the practice is generally known, most women are very secretive about their involvement with *kayan mata* and some even hide it from their partners. Listening to the experiences of these women and the sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs also revealed that *kayan mata* is mostly sourced through informal and personal networks among women in the city of Ilorin.

Public opinion, as ascertained from the narratives of the participants in this study, shows that *kayan mata* is generally believed to be many things, which include that it is a source of pleasure and sexual satisfaction that bonds partners. The factors that influence the growing popularity and prevalence of *kayan mata* among women in Ilorin are also not farfetched from the popular

perceptions discussed; namely the desire to ensure men's fidelity and to ensure the stability of relationships and families. This revealed that the men and women interviewed in this study shared very similar thoughts about the benefits of *kayan mata*. They believed that it stimulates love, enhances sexual satisfaction, and preserves relationships, marriages, and families. At the same time, the men interviewed held very serious reservations on the increasing use of *kaya mata* among married and unmarried women. These men narrated how *kayan mata* could be used as a tool to hypnotise and control men. Just like married women, the men in this study believed that *kayan mata* in the hands of a young unmarried woman could be disastrous for marriages and could destabilise families. This concern about *kayan mata* is premised on the notion that young unmarried women use *kayan mata* to hypnotise wealthy men, especially married ones; thereafter, they divert the men's attention from their families and drain them of their financial resources.

Furthermore, the proliferation of *kayan mata* in Ilorin, especially among young women, was noted by men and married women as disastrous for the preservation of the family institution. This is because it is believed that young unmarried women target married men who are more economically and socially stable and use *kayan mata* to hypnotise them, draw them away from their families, and begin to control their financial resources. This concern is causing panic among men because they believe that every woman who uses *kayan mata* is a potential man abuser, controller, and sexual entrepreneur and not just a young unmarried woman.

In line with this, it was not surprising to find men discussing how the emergence of dangerous women who use *kayan mata* has redefined the normative essentials of a woman. They believed what it means to be a woman or feminine has been altered and such various categories of women have emerged who pursue different ends. These include women who are controlling and assertive. The argument laid out by men in this regard is that these women wrestle for power and authority, as well as leadership of the household, with them. Hence, these women want to be authoritarians who control men and decide what happens within the home. This is seen as anti-culture and the abuse of manhood.

Closely related to the group of women discussed above are women who were referred to as sexual entrepreneurs. These women use *kayan mata* as an advantage in transaction/casual sexual relationships to gain economic and social rewards from men. It was argued by most participants that young unmarried women have made an enterprise of the powers of *kayan mata*. They draw on *kayan mata* to extort financial and material resources from wealthy men.

This is achieved through the belief that *kayan mata* hypnotises a man and makes him subservient to the wishes of the woman. The perceived emergence of women who control men is a dreaded phenomenon among men in Ilorin. It is seen as a threat to hegemonic masculinity and the cultural and religious norms of gender relations within families.

The final section of this chapter brought to the fore the nexus between food, body, and sexuality. The phenomenon of *kayan mata* usage among women is a culture and a ritual for sexual stimulation that adorns different parts of the body. This section established and discussed the salient nexus between food and sexuality, and body images and sexuality. Food is a very important part of human sexuality and across time, place, and cultures has been very significant for understanding sexuality. As such, food is a very important aspect of initiating and expressing love. *Kayan mata* as an important aspect of traditional aphrodisiacs among women in Nigeria was also discovered to be deeply connected to body painting. This brought to the fore a significant correlation between body image and sexuality. As a debate that is not foreign to sexuality literature, it was further reiterated that women in Ilorin, just like other women across history and cultures, use different forms of bodily images as a way of expressing their sexuality. Contextually, scarification, body painting, and the use of various jewellery and beads were the most common types of body images for expressing sexual desire and potency among women in this study. These images are varying and represent different aspects of sexuality, politics, and social class. The next chapter provides a deeper analysis of the contradictory relationships that emerge from the use of *kayan mata*. It brings to the fore the popular discourse on the influence of *kayan mata* on women's sexuality, family dynamics, and intimate relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

Understanding Contradictory Narratives in the Use of *Kayan Mata* in Ilorin: (Re)focusing on Women's Empowerment and Agency

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to understand the contradictory narratives in the use of *kayan mata*, especially its relation to women's empowerment and agency. The previous chapter provided a crucial introduction to the dynamics of traditional aphrodisiacs among women and detailed men's narratives in the understanding of these complexities. This introduction provided background knowledge of why women in Ilorin use traditional aphrodisiacs and identified the most common types in the city. This background information about the dynamic nature of *kayan mata* provided insight into the complexities of understanding women's use of these aphrodisiacs and their influence on their lives and sexuality. This chapter discusses emerging issues in the use of *kayan mata*. This is done by furthering the discussion of how the use of *kayan mata* affects women's sexual intimacy, satisfaction, and fidelity (Objective 4). Through this discussion, a critical discussion of how the use of *kayan mata* influences women's sexual relationship is presented. While the voices of women – married and unmarried – dominate the discussion in this chapter, the narratives of men will also surface in some instances to substantiate similar narratives shared across gender.

5.2 MOTIVATIONS FOR USING KAYAN MATA: FURTHER INTERROGATIONS

The factors discussed below emerged as very significant in my conversations with women in this study. Unlike the motivation for the use of *kayan mata* discussed in the previous chapter that basically captured men's narratives, this section focuses on the motivations identified by women in this study. It provides insight beyond just sexual enhancement and unveils varying and interrelated factors that motivate the use of *kayan mata* in romantic relationships – marital and non-marital.

5.2.1 Enhancing relationship fidelity: Women's narrative on sexual pleasure, love stimulation, and bonding between partners

Some women believe *kayan mata* is a mixture specially prepared to make women sexually pleasurable; more like a sexual appetizer/sweetener and a recipe used to 'repair' women and make them 'tastier'. Damilola mentioned that she started using *kayan mata* about 13 years ago before she got married and her reasons were because she wanted to stimulate her sexual life through the enhancement of her vagina's grip and firmness. She mentioned:

As a young woman of about 23 years, I was already very sexually active. My fears grew because you hear people say having sex at such a young age could make your vagina lose its firmness and when you finally get married, your husband will not enjoy sex with you. I spoke to some friends and this aunty around my area introduced us to *kayan mata*. I remember the woman selling it told us when she came to deliver them that they will make sex very pleasurable for our boyfriends and ourselves and at the same time, our vagina will not expand. She said *kayan mata* is specially prepared to make women irresistible and is a sexual appetizer and sweetener. And trust me, it's been over 10 years of using *kayan mata* and I have never regretted it. It's funny how sometimes even my husband laughs at how much I spend on buying various *kayan mata* products, but what he doesn't realise is that I was using it before I got married to him and it is one of those things that makes me his Ferrari, like he likes to call me. My relationship is very peaceful and I won't lie to you, God and my *kayan mata* recipe are to be thanked. *Kayan mata* helps you as a woman to repair your vagina. You know, after childbirth your vagina gets slackened and it is no longer firm like it used to be but *kayan mata* will repair this (Damilola, 34, female, married, two children).

Maintaining vagina firmness was a common motivation for using *kayan mata* shared by all the female participants in this study. Married or unmarried, the desire to ensure the tightness of the vagina strongly influenced their decision to use *kayan mata*. As evident from Damilola's narrative above, childbirth is believed to weaken the grip and firmness of the vagina and, importantly, the pleasure of sexual intercourse is linked to this firmness. These women believed that the firmness of the vagina has a vital influence on the level of pleasure they and their partners will enjoy during sexual intercourse; hence, it is important that they remain very firm. Shewa also mentioned that the need to keep the vagina constantly tight is a major influencing factor in the use of *kayan mata*. She mentioned:

You see, I am not married but I won't say I am a virgin. I have sex often and you know how difficult it is to be in a relationship in this generation and not give the man sex, you will end up losing him. Apart from that, I also enjoy sex but the thing is, when men go inside you and they don't find you very tight and firm, they tend to believe you're loose and a slut. So we as ladies always want to look like virgins down there. They might not tell you but they respect you when they feel your

vagina is very tight because to them it signifies that you have not had many sexual partners. I started using *kayan mata* to further tighten my vagina despite my frequent sexual intercourse but as I began to use it, I discovered it has other benefits. Most of my friends are now loyal customers of Iya-Ibeji [*kayan mata* seller] (Shewa, 22, female, single).

It was observed from Shewa's narrative, and like most other young unmarried women interviewed in this research, that virginity or vagina tightness/firmness gives men the impression that you abide by the normative moral values that define a 'responsible woman'. They often referred to how men see you as responsible, innocent, and virtuous because you have a firm/tight vagina. Therefore, to these young women, while frequent sexual intercourse, especially from a young age, could slacken the firmness of the vagina, *kayan mata* is a curative measure to tighten the vagina orifice so that their partners do not perceive them as sexually loose or promiscuous. In addition, some married and unmarried women who used *kayan mata* believed that it enhanced physical and sexual intimacy, increased love and desire between partners, and provided overall relationship satisfaction.

Apart from the fact that *kayan mata* enhances sexual pleasure and satisfaction, it is also popularly regarded as having very effective ways of bonding partners and increasing relationship happiness. One of the most challenging experiences of women in intimate relationships within the context of this research was relationship unfaithfulness/infidelity and lack of commitment between partners. Men and women alike in the study believed that *kayan mata* made partners committed and faithful to the relationship. Amina opined:

Kayan mata makes the man close to his woman because he will always desire to be with her and spend time with her. It puts her love in his heart, even if he goes thousands of kilometres away from home [from the woman in particular], he will remember the woman and come back to her. This *kayan mata* thing is of different types and they do different things. Some just make you sweet for your partner, some will make him spend for you, and some will make him loyal to you that he cannot follow other women or sleep with another person (Amina, 38, female, married, four children).

In the same light, Bola described *kayan mata* as

[s]omething that makes the man think of his partner wherever he goes. He makes the love between husband and wife very strong. No matter where he goes, he won't forget home. As he's calling you, he will be asking what he can buy for you and be very eager to come back home to you. For me, *kayan mata* ties the heart of husband and wife and makes them love themselves more (Bola, 33, female, married, two children).

From the narratives of Amina and Bola, it is noticed that *kayan mata* makes men crave their partners' presence and intimacy. The farther a man goes away from home or out of the presence of his woman, the more he desires and craves her intimacy. With these types of cravings, thoughts, and desires, it becomes very difficult for him to admire or think of another woman.

The belief that sexual pleasure and satisfaction increase relationship commitment and satisfaction was resounding as several participants referred to this. While most participants in the study generally believed that *kayan mata* has some sort of power that makes men love and care for women beyond the ordinary, social exchange theorists argue that the satisfaction derived from sex facilitates commitment in other areas of a relationship. For instance, Schwartz and Young (2009) observed in their research that sexual satisfaction is strongly correlated to relationship happiness in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships. It is argued that satisfaction in sex brings more happiness to the relationship and facilitates commitment and loyalty between partners in intimate relationships.

Consequently, *kayan mata* in Ilorin is perceived as a traditional aphrodisiac that increases love and commitment between partners. It is seen as creating a strong bond between partners and, as such, ensures fidelity. Kehinde, a seller of *kayan mata*, while responding to the question on why women use *kayan mata* in Ilorin, highlighted sexual pleasure and satisfaction, as well as economic incentives as fundamental reasons. She opined:

I talk with my customers a lot and I am also a woman, I use my own products. One of the major things that make us as women use *kayan mata* is because we want our husband or boyfriend to enjoy sex with us. We don't want them to start thinking of following other women because they are not enjoying sex with us. The truth is I have more young unmarried girls buying products from me and they use it to sleep with these men with money. After sleeping with these men, they ask for money and other things and they get them. Most of them buy control padlock, command key, favour set, and vagina tightening products. So we have more people desiring to use *kayan mata*. In fact, you must be careful who sells to you now because in our last meeting [sellers of *kayan mata* meeting], we talked about a lot of people hawking fake products on the street of Ilorin. It is really bad and it is because *kayan mata* is in high demand among women (Kehinde, 44, female, married, four children).

Aside from the fact that women in this study used *kayan mata* because of its ability to enhance sexual pleasure and satisfaction, some participants noted that the use of traditional aphrodisiacs is a practice even the wives of the Prophet Mohammed of the Islamic religion adopted. While this was not a popular narrative among all women, Amina stated categorically that the use of aphrodisiacs is supposed to be a woman's secret and it is traceable to the Quran. She believed

strongly that there was nothing diabolical about *kayan mata* because it is actually nature's way of making sex and couple's intimacy more pleasurable. She maintained that aphrodisiacs are also rooted in Islamic teachings as exemplified by the fact that the wives of the Prophet Mohammed used it too. This encouraged her to become bolder and admit to her husband and family members that she used *kayan mata*. Notwithstanding, it is important to state that Amina's reference to Islam at this point should be understood from the context of a personal conviction. Islam, like any other religion, consists of followers with divergent beliefs that are often influenced by subjective experiences and interpretations. Amina, for example, took the view that the use of *kayan mata* becomes ungodly when mixed with diabolic substances to take away the agency of one's partner. Amina expressed her thoughts on the use of *kayan mata* and its religious connection as follows:

Kayan mata is a very good thing and it is supposed to be the woman's secret, especially married women. Even the wives of Prophet Mohammed used things like these and it was to satisfy their husband. Even though I know that there are very different types but in the real sense, it is to make sure that partners enjoy their sexual life. When I use it as a woman, it is to satisfy my husband very well in bed. Even our religion teaches us to satisfy our husbands because they are the head of our home. Not just satisfying them sexually but in all areas. It is becoming more rampant among women here in Ilorin and I am aware some people have started using *juju* [something diabolical or a fetish that is connected to witchcraft practice]. It is common in West Africa, especially Nigeria, calling it *kayan mata*. You cannot use something to make your husband *mumu* [a dullard because of diabolic hypnosis] and you think God is happy with you, He does not trust me. So *kayan mata* is not a bad thing because it is in the Quran but using *juju* as *kayan mata* is terrible and a sin (Amina, 38, female, married, four children).

The religious undertone to the use of *kayan mata* becomes very important yet complex when examining the issues that emanate, as will be discussed later in this chapter. It brings to the fore narratives and debates that examine whether women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs is merely to satisfy men, which could be another form of patriarchal dominance and repression of female agency. In addition, some women were of the opinion that *kayan mata* brings peace and serenity to the home. This assertion is further linked to the notion that securing their husbands' love and commitment would avoid domestic violence and would also curb the spread of infectious diseases since infidelity will be addressed. Sola noted:

The advantages of *kayan mata* go beyond just enjoying sex, reaching climax, and collecting money and resources from the man. What a lot of people don't understand is that when partners are loyal, committed, and faithful to themselves, a whole lot of other problems are resolved. For example, when my husband loves and adores me, he would not beat me up or assault my children, that way domestic

violence will be a no-go area in my home. Secondly, because I have him covered, he would not cheat and that way the chances of bringing diseases such as HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] or STIs [sexually transmitted infections] are completely reduced. So *kayan mata* is far more important than sexual stimulation. It guarantees the total peace and sanctity of the home (Sola, 26, female, married, two children).

Sola's argument was that using *kayan mata* reduced domestic violence because women can effectively exercise their sexual rights without a fierce challenge from men; it will also reduce the spread of diseases such as HIV and STIs because fidelity is assured to a reasonable extent. *Kayan mata* is therefore perceived as an aphrodisiac that offers women several advantages, which include the fact that it enhances their pleasure of sexual experiences, stimulates love in romantic relationships, increases bonding between partners, as well as ensures partners' fidelity, thereby limiting women's exposure to the risk of various STIs. Overall, it boosts women's sexual confidence, and this is fundamental to claiming agency in intimate relationships. The next section examines how sexual confidence relates to women's claim to agency.

5.2.2 Reflections on sexual confidence and women's desire to assert agency in intimate relationships

In the pursuit of agency and recognition within the politics of the household, women described *kayan mata* as a very important measure to boost sexual confidence. This notion is premised on the idea that the more confidence a woman has in her abilities to sexually satisfy a man, the more empowered she is to make decisions within her relationship without fear of being shut down. Several women within the study noted that *kayan mata* is a self-care practice that makes the woman more desirable and pleasurable to the man and, as such, puts her in a better position to negotiate what she desires within her relationship.

Abike believed *kayan mata* increases a woman's sexual confidence. She narrated how she had discovered from experience that the more confidence you have in your sexual abilities as a woman, the better placed you are to negotiate your desires within an intimate relationship. She noted:

Kayan mata are products that help you take care of your body. I notice a lot of women do not pay attention to their bodies. You can imagine as a woman, you will not take care of yourself, you will just be anyhow and you think anyone will take you seriously. Not just about your husband or sex now but generally in life. We all want something good and men also do want something good. Once you tosh

[enhance] your sexual life up to a point where they get all they want and desire in you, you will be able to demand things and they will never shut you down. What I noticed is that beyond *juju* or any other things that people claim that *kayan mata* have, we must see this thing like buying and selling a thing. You want men to want and enjoy you so desperately, don't get me wrong, ooh, it is not like they also do not enjoy it but they are all connected to themselves. Once you have this thing, they will calm down and think twice before telling you rubbish. This thing is simple, let me give you another example. Have you seen how women also treat men who cannot do [perform sexually] very well? They don't respect them, they don't even see them as men, and the women might begin to look outside. So many women do not understand this thing is similar. We need this *kayan mata* to up our game as women and to gain some respect from our husbands. I personally love adventure [laughs] and I have never regretted that I'm using *kayan mata*. Again, what I have discovered is that the more attention and care you give to your body, the more confident you are (Abike, 38, female, married, four children).

Abike's story shows how women can boost their sexual confidence by investing more time in their bodies and as a counter to unequal power relations. She narrated how personal satisfaction with one's sexuality enhances how you relate with others and how women could use this to negotiate a position of importance in an intimate relationship. Aduni further reiterated this point:

The more aware you become about what turns you on and helps you experience pleasure, the more informed you are about communicating this to your partner. And it leads to more positive and pleasurable intimate experience and relationship satisfaction. The reason why this is important is that you know yourself and you know that your body provides pleasure, fun, and enjoyment for your partner. That way, both of you are more able to talk about issues without anyone intimidating anybody. You can imagine denying him sex that he's crazy about just because he's being stubborn by not listening; he wouldn't want to miss out. These are some of the things. Once you know yourself, pay attention to your body, be that woman that her man can't wait to see when he's out because he misses the way you make him feel, then you don't have a problem. He won't disrespect you or treat you poorly. He will understand the children are as much his as they are yours. The truth is sexual pleasure and satisfaction solve a lot of problems within relationships (Aduni, 45, female, married, five children).

Consequently, it is believed that increased sexual confidence influences relationship stability and security. This is through the enhancement of pleasure and sexual satisfaction that stimulate love and create a bond between partners. Most of the women interviewed described sexual intercourse as a very important aspect of a relationship that influences its survival, stability, and continuity.

Esther mentioned that women need to pay as much attention to their sexual virility as they pay to that of men. She opined:

You can never underestimate the place of sex in a relationship. Sex is very important. I love sex and appreciate when my man brings his “A game” [sexually satisfying], so it is also important that I make myself very pleasurable to him. I must make him desire me, want me, and miss me. You’ll always hear women saying that man is not good in bed, he’s this and that, but do they really talk about their own sexual performance? Do they think of the fact that they might also not be giving their man enough pleasure? There is this false belief that most women think that a man just wants to cum [ejaculate] and that’s all, but it is not always the case. They want to cum and also enjoy it. So, as a woman, spice up your sexual life, don’t just make him cum, give him something to think about. Something that will always put you in his head and he will never treat you poorly. So, for me, how do I do this? I get various *kayan mata* products to spice up my sexual life. I give him sexual experiences he could not have imagined and as such he becomes loyal. I just laugh when I hear people say *kayan mata* is diabolic because it is not. This is simple logic. Give a man very good sex and he won’t cheat on you. He will take very good care of you and he will be loyal. All these women who complain that their husbands are unfaithful need to examine themselves and their sexual life (Esther, 32, female, married, two children).

Esther highlighted the importance of sexual satisfaction to relationship satisfaction. It is important that both partners put in the effort to make sexual intimacy not just regular but pleasurable and memorable. While all the women interviewed in this study believed *kayan mata* enhanced sexual pleasure and satisfaction, they described and explained it differently and they all related it to the fact that it boosted the woman’s sexual confidence. *Kayan mata* therefore enhances sexual pleasure and thereby boosts women’s sexual confidence and ultimately positions her to negotiate her place within intimate relationships and families. In the next section, I critically examine the dynamics and complexities of empowerment in the intimate domain for women.

5.2.3 Personal liberation in the intimate domain

It is common knowledge not just among women but also shared by the male participants in this study that *kayan mata* empowers women in intimate relationships. The perception of this ‘empowerment’ is nevertheless very divergent. Empowerment meant different things to different people within this study. Even among women, the perception of empowerment was very fluid as its meaning is influenced by several factors such as culture, religion, and, most importantly, personal experience. This section discusses how women’s use of *kayan mata* influences their sexual relationships and affects other areas of their intimate life. Sola described

kayan mata as a popular secret among women that is targeted towards empowerment. She noted:

Kayan mata is women's secret, ooh, and we use it because we want to show that we too can be powerful, not just men. I call it secret because almost everybody now knows what it is but we as women would not want you to know we're using it. Because as a woman I would not want people to start talking up and down that I used something for my husband and that is why he listens to me or does not follow women. Most women use *kayan mata* but they will not agree that they use it. People will begin to think you're doing *juju* [voodoo] once they know you're adding things to make your sexual life more interesting (Sola, 26, female, married, two children).

Kayode, a male participant, substantiated this narrative. While discussing some of the reasons why women use *kayan mata*, he explained how it is a very important tool women draw upon to claim agency and empower themselves in an intimate relationship. He mentioned:

Kayan mata is not just a sexual stimulant. It is a very powerful sexual stimulant that performs several functions. It stimulates sex and also gives women power that could sometimes threaten our place as men in the family. Women use it to be very powerful. You will hear things like that woman has wrapped her husband's head under her armpit [implying that she is controlling the man]. You do not need to be surprised when you see or hear about that because I have seen men get controlled with these *kayan mata* things and it is very dangerous for us as men (Kayode, 42, male, married, five children).

Interestingly, most of the participants in this study across all sample categories believed that *kayan mata* was used by women to gain more power and have a greater say in intimate relationships. Notwithstanding, there are many perspectives on how empowerment is attained and experienced by women in their relationships. One of the most controversial issues raised by the men interviewed in this study, and a reoccurring discourse in the media about *kayan mata*, is that the power or influence women enjoy within intimate relationships could be beyond aphrodisiacs to be related to diabolical/fetish practices intended to hypnotise and control men. It is believed to contain some inexplicable powers that hypnotise men and make them subservient to the wishes of women (Sahara Reporters 2009). Moreover, the notion that *kayan mata* gives women power within intimate relationships was very compelling for this research and it is one of the major objectives of the study. During the course of the interviews, the participants were asked questions that sought to understand whether *kayan mata* was used for purposes beyond sexual stimulation. The responses are quite fascinating and engaging as they reflect the intersection between these traditional aphrodisiacs and power dynamism in an intimate relationship. Aisha mentioned that the presumed power *kayan mata* gives women is

not necessarily to bruise the ego of the man as so many believe but to make him love, care for, and respect the woman. She mentioned:

We use *kayan mata* to have some peace in our home even though it is through sex. I mean peace because you will be able to do what you want anytime you want without a man shouting at you or saying you cannot. You will be able to give him advice as to your partner and he will listen. You can be consulted, if you say you're not doing [engaging in sexual intercourse], he will be begging you and not shouting at you or trying to force you. You won't feel less than anybody and it is important for us as women. Both of us have to be understanding and considerate and not just me as the woman. Every time, everybody wants the woman to understand because she's a woman. Why can't the man also understand and bend [compromise]? But with *kayan mata*, all these things will be discussed and the decision will be reached together between the man and woman, not just that someone is forcing what they want on you. So, the power of *kayan mata* to me is to make the man listen more to your request, make him love and care for you more. And the truth is the more he enjoys the things [sex] with you, the more he desires you and will not find any other woman sweet like you. I know that some women can use the thing to control men, ooh, but it is not good (Aisha, 28, female, single).

Furthermore, Zainab noted that she did not like to see her influence over the man as 'power' but would rather describe it as being 'significant', 'important', or 'respected'. She mentioned:

Kayan mata gives you what people call power as a woman, but I don't like to use that word. I would say you become a pillar to reckon with in the man's life and a continual source of attention and reference. You become very significant or important to him. And the thing is even his friends and family will notice how important you are to him and would not disrespect you, especially if he has money. This is my own understanding and I do not think it is in any way a bad thing. The man will still be a man and you cannot take that away from them. Me, I don't want any aphrodisiac that will make me look like I am controlling my husband. He's the head and that is how it should be, but what I am saying is that as women we deserve more than the respect and recognition we are given by men in relationships and even within the families of our husband. So *kayan mata* will help you as a woman to be a respectable woman who they cannot just push aside (Zainab, 30, female, married, two children).

Abike described how *kayan mata* leads to changes in a man's behaviour as he begins to show more love and care towards the woman. She further explained how this also translates into overall relationship satisfaction. She noted:

Kayan mata gives you power, you become very powerful, not power in the sense of doing miracles [laughs]. What I mean is that in your marriage and even in your husband's house, they will know that they cannot push you to the back when they need to do something and make important decisions. In most cases, they will begin to say you're using *juju*, but it is not a problem for me. *Kayan mata* is so good because you will just have peace generally in your home, no unnecessary fights,

and arguments. You will just understand yourself. What used to cause fights most times between husband and wife is because the man will not listen to the woman and the woman also feels she has a right to be heard. When I bring my idea, you must not throw it away, but men, because of their man things, will always want to act like they know everything and women know nothing. Honestly, this is why couples fight, but *kayan mata* will help you reduce that his pride is small, and he will reason like a human being that he should be (Abike, 38, female, married, four children).

However, Yetunde extended the discussion of power within intimate relationships as experienced in the use of *kayan mata* to include the enjoyment of socio-economic privileges such as being showered with numerous material gifts as a woman. *Kayan mata* not only makes you powerful but also brings economic rewards, according to her. She opined:

Kayan mata gives you economic benefits and control over the man. Don't you know it is good when whatever you ask of a man is done? [laughs]. And the way these things work is that it does not matter how little the men have, he will spoil you in his little way. The more money he has, the more he will pour on you without asking. And that is why these small girls are using it for men with money. You see them wearing all the fine clothes and shoes, traveling everywhere around the world, because most of them spend a lot of money getting very potent and efficient *kayan mata* to help their market. And that is my problem with it because they will collect our husbands, ooh [laughs], and they are giving us pressure now to also up our game to keep our men (Yetunde, 32, female, married, three children).

The fear that *kayan mata* in the hands of young unmarried women is potentially dangerous for marriages, considering what it could achieve, was a resounding argument among men and married women that spanned through this study. However, the perception of power, empowerment, and agency was broad and relative. A more compelling narrative among women was the explanation of agency within the confines of normative gender roles. This implies that they desired some freedom but not to the point where it challenged normative gender expectations. As empowerment became an important concept within this discourse of *kayan mata*, the participants' thoughts on the need for women's empowerment and the measures adopted to pursue such ends are examined. Gender inequality and prejudice emerged as an important driver of women's need for empowerment and liberation in the intimate terrain. In the next section, I examine how power dynamics within intimate relationships influence women's quest for agency.

5.2.3.1 *Unequal power relations in sexual relationships and women's quest for agency*

Years of unequal power relations in sexual relationships and family at large is a major factor that influences women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs. This unequal power relationship is contemporarily challenged by women's increased desire for agency through various measures. This section discusses how some of the participants drew on *kayan mata* as a tool to unseat years of what they described as patriarchal oppression and the repression of women's freedom.

As one of the fundamental objectives of this study, I sought to understand how the use of traditional aphrodisiacs influences women's agency. Initially, I asked questions around sexual agency; however, most of the women interviewed connected the use of sexual stimulants not only to sexual agency, but 'agency' as a central term in the discussion of sexuality (life and living; personal identity as a woman). They explained how traditional aphrodisiacs helped them to exercise power not only in their sexual lives but also in matters within the family.

The questions asked were directed at women to understand their perceptions of traditional aphrodisiacs in relation to their sexual agency. Aduni, during the course of the interview, gave an emotional explanation of how *kayan mata* helps women to claim agency within relationships and families. She said:

You know how people can think you're less powerful, insignificant, and undeserving because you're a woman. Men think there is this thing that makes them suddenly superior because of their gender. I do not blame them for enjoying the privilege our society has given them, but I am not going to be a woman who would be treated as less important and insignificant. I made up my mind a long time ago that I won't be another toy in the hands of a man and that is why I started using *kayan mata*. There are different types, but I use command key and control padlock. I make my husband listen to me whether he likes it or not. There is no stubborn man, you've just not handled him well (Aduni, 45, female, married, five children).

Aduni described how a woman's identity is shaped and influenced by socio-cultural imperatives that prioritise masculinity at the expense of femininity. This normativity is one that makes most women feel lesser and not as important as men; not just within the household and intimate relationships but also within society. Being discontent with this socio-cultural gender hierarchical arrangement, Aduni saw *kayan mata* as an opportunity to achieve her goal of asserting agency.

Furthermore, Aduni explained how she has seen women depend on men for almost everything. She narrated how she grew up in a family where her mother's life revolved around her father,

who she called the ‘Alpha and Omega’ of her life. Her mother depended on him for everything and even at the most infuriating provocation from him, she did not react or express how she felt because her sustenance depended on him. This was when Aduni made up her mind not just to be an independent woman but also one who would be respected by her spouse if she ever got married. She narrated:

As a young girl, I used to be very inquisitive, I asked plenty of questions. And you can imagine. I remember some adults who visited our home, then will complain I am too bright and inquisitive for a woman. They claim I want to know everything, and women are not expected to be like that. So, growing up I was always acting opposite to what is expected of me as a girl. I will talk when they wanted me to be quiet, ask questions where I should have nodded in agreement, play with boys when they wanted me to either be alone or look for female playmates. What I want you to understand is that apart from my mother’s experience and those of her sisters, I also experienced a lot growing up. My father used to drink and come home messed up and my mom will not be able to do anything, even though she’s mad, because if she complained too much, we will not get food money the next day. He acted anyhow he wanted and would even abuse me for the way I stared sometimes as a child, but it didn’t make much sense to me until I was grown up. I asked my mom why she had to act like everything was okay when it wasn’t. I saw when she cried, the pain in her eyes, but yet she would smile and say it is fine when my father or his brother dished out any instruction that you dared not challenge. Guess what my mom said... [laughs]. She said the man is the head of the home and community and as women we must do their bidding. I told her I have heard her but deep down inside me, I was angry and could not imagine how I will have to accept everything that a man says simply because he is a man. This is the stubborn side of me, and I actually thought to myself, I can’t cope and do not think marriage is for me. Now looking at where I come from and the things I have been through, I feel that women have been imprisoned for long by different aspects of our society. Culture will do their own, religion will do its own, and the same in society. Trust me, when I had the opportunity to embrace *kayan mata* and make my husband reasonable, I took it without thinking twice. If my man can respect me, no other person will try shit with me. They say it in family meetings behind me that I have used *juju* on him and that I am a woman they should run from. They even tell the younger boys not to bring a stubborn and difficult woman like me home as a wife, but I don’t care. As women, we must be humans, we’re not less than anyone and should not be treated as such. I am on a mission to make sure *kayan mata* reaches as many married women as possible. This nonsense of caging us and our abilities must stop. Enough is enough (Aduni, 45, female, married, five children).

This narrative summarises how the desire to claim agency influenced the use of *kayan mata* among most women in this study. Aduni was married, and she had become a major proponent of *kayan mata* in Ilorin. She started an informal group that became a very significant link between this research and most of the female participants interviewed. This group consisted of married women who shared their experiences about the use of *kayan mata* and advised

themselves on products that could be used to address various types of challenges women face within their relationships. It has become a group of solace and comfort to several women. This sense of belonging (sisterhood) gave them the strength to navigate the challenges of intimate relationships.

It is important to state that Aduni's experience is one that resonates with the notion that various traditional aphrodisiacs might be mediums through which women seek to negotiate power within intimate familial terrains and navigate patriarchal spaces, as argued by WAF. Aduni mentioned it was about 20 years ago when she had first heard of *kayan mata*. She was told it would make a man love, respect, and care for his woman in an interesting conversation with a group of friends. As a woman who was always interested in being very autonomous, she decided to try it; in her words, 'Seeing is believing.' The purpose of *kayan mata* to Aduni and most of the other women interviewed is not just for sexual stimulation but as a tool to exercise power and control within an intimate relationship and the family.

The perception of sexual agency was quite divergent among these women; they all expressed their understanding of freedom to do what they want or choose to act independently in regard of sexual activities differently. While the likes of Aduni believed part of the effects of *kayan mata* was to make women autonomous and independent within their relationships and families, some other women believed that the agency they sought was to be heard and listened to by their spouses and they had no business in becoming fully responsible for the decisions made within families. Olabisi believed women's desire to claim agency should not threaten the position of men within the family and society in general. She described the type of power women could enjoy from *kayan mata* in the following manner:

We can argue a lot about if we as women are supposed to use *kayan mata* as a medium to control men, and my take will always remain NO. It is not good for us as women to abuse *kayan mata* like that. Our husbands are our head and that is what our culture and religion support. The man is supposed to be the head of the home, your body belongs to him, and you must not deny him. You can now imagine what type of damage you will do to his manhood if you begin to control him like a toy. Trust me, *kayan mata* is very powerful and you can even tell him to sit there and he will obey, but that is not cultural and religious for us. Like women, men are supposed to take care of us and respect us. The reason why women used to use *kayan mata* before in Northern Nigeria is because they wanted to satisfy their husbands so that their families can have peace. So, the power that *kayan mata* will give women is for them to satisfy their husbands, make men respect us as their wife, but never to be higher or equal to the man. Everywhere you go, there is always a leader and people following, you can't have two leaders. In this case, the men are

the leaders and we as women are the followers (Olabisi, 32, female, married, three children).

Olabisi's narrative captured the thoughts of some of the women in this study who believed women were expected to enjoy some agency in intimate relationships but not to the point where it made them equal to men or challenged masculinity. She further mentioned that it was important to balance inequality within intimate relationship but there must be limits. A deeper examination of her perspective showed how her beliefs about the agency of women were influenced by religion and culture. These very basic institutions greatly influence identity formation and thought processes and have been shaped by prolonged interaction with patriarchy. Hence, it is not surprising to see how Olabisi further conformed to gender roles and expectations. The major difference between her story and that of Aduni is that the former recognised the fact that various institutions within society have normalised the second-class position of women and that these are systems of oppression that women must challenge through every medium. Olabisi's perception of femininity and masculinity was a pointer to how normative gender roles and expectations shape sexuality. Further enquiries about women's claim of agency led to a conversation around how the use of *kayan mata* increases women's sexual confidence.

Closely related to the discussion above is the notion of 'assertiveness'. The responsibility of making a decision as relating to very important matters within the home is traditionally and exclusively reserved for the man in most patriarchal societies. Colfer et al. (2015) argued that there is a need to further encourage and give the opportunity for the involvement of women in decision making, especially regarding issues within the familial terrain. These micro-level decisions affect their daily lives and influence large-scale decisions within society. Agency for women cannot be fully guaranteed if so-called minor issues such as the ones within the family are not addressed (Colfer et al. 2015). While the previous section on empowerment addressed women who use *kayan mata* as a collaborative tool to gain a position of importance and relevance within familial spaces, this section focuses on women who seek to change the status quo (a complete overhaul of patriarchy).

Bola commented extensively on how *kayan mata* makes women assertive in relationships and families. She narrated:

Marriages and relationships, in general, have been very unfair to women for too long. I was raised as a Muslim and that says a lot about who I am. I am expected to be a wife, expected to be submissive, soft spoken, caring. I am expected to bow

to every wish of my husband and men in general because if I don't, I would have committed a sacrilege against God. But my question has always been, why will this God give me reasoning abilities when he designed men to make decisions for me? Why can I think if God is too pleased with others [men] thinking on my behalf? These are some of the very disturbing thoughts that pushed me to use *kayan mata*. I have been in very abusive relationships where men took advantage of me because I am a woman, hiding under the curtains of religion and culture, but I said enough was enough. I met a woman who introduced me to *kayan mata*, control padlock. I am not ashamed to tell you that I control my husband. I decide what happens in my home and I am very fine with that. Men need to learn, and this is our opportunity as women. *Kayan mata* is of different types and grades but there are some that will give the woman complete leadership of the home (Bola, 33, female, married, two children).

It is very important to note that some of the women who used *kayan mata* drew on traditional aphrodisiacs as a mechanism to distort patriarchal arrangements that accord certain privileges to men. To these women, it was not enough to be recognised by men or to assert agency at an egalitarian level with men; rather, it was important that women also begin to enjoy privileges that would put them ahead of men. In the same light, Aduni also thought it was very important that all married women drew on the opportunity provided by some of these very powerful *kayan mata* products to change the narrative about women. She opined:

You see, for a very long time now, women are the weak ones. They are to be controlled – good for just sex and bearing children. But it is fine, it is time women embrace the power in their vagina. It is now evident that with the power in the vagina and stimulation with *kayan mata*, a woman can become anything. This so-called privilege that men enjoy makes them treat women unfairly. But the good news is, with *kayan mata* infidelity will be reduced, he will take very good care of you and your children. He will respect you and you will no longer be that barking dog that can't bite within the home. It is just disturbing to hear some of the things people say about women who use *kayan mata*, especially men. They [men] are scared women will control them, but they find it comfortable and think it is normal for them to control women. This has been the way society operated for a very long time and we have gotten used to it. So, it is okay for me to be controlled, told what to do, and even denied so many privileges and opportunities because I am a woman, but I am suddenly a witch when I have such powers as a woman. Can you see how people think? I am not sorry about the fact that I use *kayan mata* and, in fact, I advise other married women to use it all the time. I have discovered if we do not help ourselves as women, nobody will help us. I did not make myself a woman and will not allow any man or society to make me feel less because of my gender (Aduni, 45, female, married, five children).

From Aduni's narrative, it is evident that the conception of power and assertiveness has been historically gendered. This historical gender narrative privileges the male gender at the expense of the female. Aduni saw this social arrangement as a structurally predetermined arrangement

to favour men that women must challenge and distort. Moreover, it is important to note that power and assertion in relationships are usually very complex and influenced by several other factors. This being said, the normative structure of this society naturally puts men at an advantage over women. Highlighting this dynamism, Trella (2005) argued that power and influence in a relationship are usually structurally defined and not solely based on personal attributes but are constantly being negotiated between partners. Most of the female participants in this study who referred to *kayan mata* as a tool to unsettle patriarchy and to change the gender status quo also extensively spoke about how *kayan mata* gave them an edge in the negotiation of the power dynamics. In addition, Catacutan, McGaw and Llanza (2014) argued that a very significant number of women are still disadvantaged by exclusion from decision making at household, community, and national levels. Bearing this in mind, most of the women in this study identified the desire to be involved, respected, and recognised as the major factor that drove their use of *kayan mata* and their desire to claim agency within intimate spaces. Interestingly, the women adopted various measures to achieve their goals, and one of them is discussed in the next section.

5.2.4 Navigating patriarchal spaces and women's assertion of agency: *Kayan mata* as a strategy for capturing men's sexual pleasure

Women's sexual agency within intimate relationships and agency within households emerged as an important theme of this study; however, it was also observable from the narratives analysed above that the motivation for the use of *kayan mata* by women was usually to satisfy their husbands' sexual needs. The need to satisfy the sexual cravings of the man and to look sexually desirable were prevalent motivations for the use of *kayan mata* among these women; however, it must be understood that most of these women used this route as a measure for negotiation in intimate relationships. Sexual agency and power negotiation within relationships and families are therefore usually secondary as they come after the woman first satisfies the man's sexual desire. Satisfying and prioritising partners' sexual needs was therefore conceived as a means to reaching empowerment within the intimate terrain for some of these women. Sola mentioned the following in the course of her interview:

Women basically use *kayan mata* for their husbands. However, there is a twist to this. Women who feel they are not sexually engaging enough seek to satisfy their partners and get *kayan mata*. Those types of women will tell you they are not using *kayan mata* for any man but themselves. But you see, all of us love men and our families, so we do everything we can do to keep them for ourselves and our

children. It is, however, true that *kayan mata* can give you more than just sexually satisfying the man. But we first want to make the man happy, all this so he will not look outside and follow other women because we believe we need to give him the sex he wants. Should I say most women or someone like myself believe men love sex, or what else are they looking for in other women? So, once we're able to tie them down with that sex that they like, we can now talk of other issues like money or who decides what in the house. All these *wahala* [effort] we're going through as women, are for all these men, ooh (Sola, 26, female, married, two children).

The priority placed on male sexuality is very high and could be connected to the dominant nature of gender roles on the one hand. From Sola's story above, it is evident that embracing and accepting the normative idea that men 'need more sex' or should 'get more sex' makes most women place a man's sexuality above theirs. This is also implicative of how women view sexual agency or agency in general. Interestingly, some women in the study believed that women should claim agency but within the parameters of gender roles so as not to distort the conventional gender social hierarchy.

Notwithstanding, a critical assessment of these narratives revealed that these women's use of *kayan mata* was not just about satisfying their partners' sexual needs but as a means to attain significant positions of influence within intimate relationships and families. The use of *kayan mata* is becoming more prevalent for reasons beyond sexual stimulation to include the need for power, economic resources, and social status. Bola also believed that *kayan mata* stimulated sexual intercourse but more importantly made the woman more pleasurable for the man. She mentioned:

We as women want to give our husband the best of sex so they don't look outside or follow those small girls in tiny skirts. If you cannot sexually satisfy your husband, then you have just started having problems in your marriage. So *kayan mata* is very good for making the man enjoy sex. It makes you sweet and he will always want more of you. My husband usually tells me that thinking about how he feels when we make love alone turns him on. I won't lie, I also enjoy it but it is more fulfilling when you finish that thing [sexual intercourse] and your husband tell you *iyawo mi mogbadun ee* [I enjoyed it] (Bola, 33, female, married, two children).

While the desire to satisfy sexual needs and to enhance the pleasure of the man was a common narrative among most of the female participants in this study, this perception was described in a diverse manner.

The narratives of the participants discussed above emphasise the importance of sexual intercourse for relationship stability. Furthermore, they noted that the use of *kayan mata*

increased women's sexual confidence and through this self-assurance in their sexual abilities, women's claim to agency became easier and better negotiated within intimate relationships. In addition, the participants linked sexual satisfaction to fidelity, loyalty, increased love and care, and the overall stability of relationships. Sexual satisfaction was also seen as a collaborative effort between both partners. In this light, the Interpersonal Sexual Exchange Model argues that relationship quality affects sexual satisfaction and vice versa (Byers 2005). Furthermore, the literature establishes that emotional distance, unresolved conflict, and not feeling loved all lower sexual satisfaction and consequently relationship satisfaction (Ménard and Offman 2009; Del Mar et al. 2014). The narratives of the participants in this study further corroborated arguments that sexual satisfaction influences relationship satisfaction. The participants mentioned that spicing up their sex life with the help of *kayan mata* had made their relationships more harmonious. The married women interviewed in this study emphatically mentioned that *kayan mata* through its various sexually stimulating products helped to maintain their marriages

5.2.5 Negotiating the politics of the household: Competition among co-wives and mediating in-law crises

Kayan mata is drawn upon as a tool to outperform other wives in polygynous homes in fierce competition or basically to curtail a man from cheating or taking a second wife in a monogamous home. Anatu was married to a man with three other wives, but she referred to *kayan mata* as a negotiating tool in the politics of her household. Her narratives bring to the fore the dynamics of *kayan mata* and how its efficacy is also stratified into varying classes. She explained how *kayan mata* became very useful in how she maintained her position as the first wife in her home:

I married my husband when I was 20 years old, after he completed his National Youth Service Corp in Sokoto. We had dated for about a year while he was serving and got married afterwards. My parents were at first not comfortable with the marriage because he was Yoruba and I am Hausa but religion became the common ground on which both families agreed. Being Muslims made things very easy. Now, as a Muslim woman, I understand that the Quran allows my husband to take up to four wives and I grew up in this type of family. My own mother was the first wife among my father's four wives and she remained the most influential when it comes to family decisions until today. She is never disrespected by any of the other wives and they even come to her when they need something from my father. About two months before my wedding, Mama called me into her room and said she wanted to tell me some secrets to remaining relevant within your husband's house as the first wife. It was that night she told me about the different types of *kayan*

mata. She mentioned that *kayan mata* is not just all about making sex more pleasurable for you and your partner but some preparation could be made to bond you to your husband and make you the first priority. She told me it is a family secret that she got from her mother and she would give it to me. Of course, before this conversation with my mom I knew *kayan mata* and understood you are meant to use it to cleanse yourself and prepare you for marriage and childbirth as a young woman before your wedding, but I never knew there was more to the respect my mother enjoyed from my father and everybody within our home (Anatu, 46, female, married, four children).

From the narrative above, it is clear that Anatu used *kayan mata* as a very important tool to stay at the peak of the politics of her home. These polygynous homes require that all these women protect the interest of their children and themselves. The allocation of household resources is highly contested, and conflict ensues between wives and children. This competition between co-wives is further exacerbated when wives need to depend on their husband's investment decisions on child welfare, health, and educational attainment in especially a credit-constrained environment; what you then observe is wives struggling to be the most loved by their husband so that their children would be the first to partake of any beneficial decision in the home. This is the position Anatu occupied within her home. Furthermore, Anatu stated:

She told me it is natural for men to want to spend more time with their latest wife but your place as the first in the household should not be disregarded, so this special preparation used by sitting on steam, the heat goes directly into your vagina. Part of the ingredients used includes tiger nuts and these grounded mixed recipes will also be mixed with *kunu* [local beverage] for your husband. I use this thing once every five years and today I am the first wife of four wives and I enjoy my privileges as the mother of the house. My husband listens to me and trusts me, it is what I want that stands in that house. If you do not make your place known like this, you will suffer and it is your kids who will suffer the most. Some men after taking up other women forget that you exist and don't even look after your own children like they should. Getting school fees will become a problem, among other things. And I have to be sincere with you, it is not easy growing up or living in a polygamous house; the strife, jealousy, and hatred in the heart of some people are just unimaginable. So, you have to protect your interest and the interest of your children. And all these wives use it but trust me, *kayan mata* pass *kayan mata* [she refers to grades in the efficacy of *kayan mata* products]. There was a time my husband's third wife came to ask me what my secret was. She mentioned that my husband tells them that I am the mother of the house and none of them will take my place. I told her it is God and there was nothing special. This is how they backbite and try to lure you into telling them what you use that makes you more relevant (Anatu, 46, female, married, four children).

One of the implications of polygynous marriages as narrated by participants in this study is that it pits co-wives against each other. Jealousy, tension, competitiveness, and strain are most observed within these households. Thriving in such a competitive environment thus leads women to seeking alternatives that will make them relevant within the home. The first wives are usually under pressure not to lose their place as the matriarch of the home. Also important is that while the relationships between co-wives are usually very competitive, there are some instances where they could be collaborative. Moreover, what came out strongly from the narratives of the participant presented above is that the unequal distribution of husbands' material and emotional attention among wives is a major cause of fractious relationships. This is usually regardless of the fact that there are expectations of equal treatment before these unions are consummated. Inequalities thrive and tension ensues because husbands sometimes favour one wife over the other(s), particularly a newer wife in the early stages of their marriage.

The second story that reiterates the importance of *kayan mata* in the politics of the household is that of Toro, a 38-year-old married woman with five children. Toro explained how she started using *kayan mata* and the situation within her home that led to her involvement with it. For Toro, her decision to use *kayan mata* was not influenced by a need to make sex more pleasurable but because her marriage was threatened. Toro said:

I started using *kayan mata* after my third daughter. This was because my husband's family was becoming a bone in my neck; they wanted to destroy my marriage, in fact, and they started advising him to marry another woman that will bear him male children. I cried for days because I did not know what I had done wrong; was it my fault that I had girls and am I God, the giver of children? I was actually falling into depression, lost weight, and could not even do anything productive at work anymore before a colleague from the office spoke to me. I knew before that time she was the type they said controlled her husband, but I thought she was using *juju*. But to my surprise she told me about *kayan mata* and how it uses sexual intimacy to bond couples together. In fact, she told me the perfect one for me was the chicken bonding herb. She said once I used this, my husband will never consider the thought of marrying another woman or listen to the advice of his family. That's how I started using *kayan mata* and to the glory of God, I told my dealer that I wanted to have male children and she said they could organise a special fertility herb for me. I paid and they delivered it after three weeks. I conceived after three months and my next child was a boy. Today I have two boys. I use *kayan mata* because beyond control, bonding, and sexual stimulation, it brings peace to your home. You can imagine how peaceful it will be if you do not have to fight or argue over anything with your partner. You understand yourself deeply (Toro, 38, female, married, five children).

The narratives of these two participants emphasise some salient factors that highlight the use of traditional aphrodisiacs among women. It brings to light issues that describe the varying

nature of *kayan mata* as a traditional aphrodisiac, especially its role within the family social-relational process. It is also held that *kayan mata* can be used to control men and extort resources from them. Upon asking Anatu what other reasons could make women use *kayan mata*, she mentioned that ‘it can be used to control men. You tell them to sit and they sit. While this is to the extreme, we have women who use it to collect money and other things from them’. In addition, Toro gave an example of how one of her friends started using *kayan mata*. She mentioned:

There are no stubborn men. Any man who cheats, beats you, and doesn’t take care of you, is worth taming. You need to put a rope around his neck and make him calm. Among my clique of friends, we have a friend whose husband was like this, I took her to my dealer and they prepared command padlock for her. After she started using it, the guy calmed down and started behaving. We can’t have men disrespect us because we are women, never (Toro, 38, female, married, five children).

These women felt that it was important to regulate men’s sexual desire because not doing this would imply that they could get involved in extramarital relationships/affairs. Hence, apart from ensuring men’s fidelity, it gives women some recognition and a significant position of influence within relationships. Moreover, it is more interesting to see how these women linked the effectiveness of *kayan mata* to God. They were of the opinion that the use of traditional aphrodisiacs was sanctioned by the God because if they were not, the aphrodisiacs would not be effective. Moreover, most of the participants believed that the use should be within limits. Also, there is an overlap between the natural and the supernatural in their description of *kayan mata* and its effect on sexual relationships. While they referred to *kayan mata* as an aphrodisiac, they often related its effectiveness to the supernatural being – God. The supernatural is therefore conceptualised in two dimensions, namely the supernatural that supports good (God, and often used by women to support their use of *kayan mata*), and the supernatural power that causes bad omens (*juju*) and gives women undue advantage.

5.3 SEXUAL AROUSAL, SEXUAL CONSENT, AND THE USE OF KAYAN MATA AMONG WOMEN

The examination of consent is broadly and widely debated in cases of rape where one partner does not give permission for sexual intercourse. This is much easier to engage because consent in this regard is often measured based on direct approval. However, the perception of consent in contexts where a partner arouses sexual desire in the other without explicit permission or

interest has remained problematic in the use of *kayan mata*. Sexual consent is defined as a mutual agreement to participate in sexual activity. As simply explained, consent is a very important way of expressing sexual agency and respecting personal boundaries (Munro 2008). Consent was a major concern for most male participants in this study. Most of the women interviewed emphasised the fact that *kayan mata* was a hidden practice. Ronke mentioned:

... you cannot necessarily use *kayan mata* and inform your husband or partner. I have friends who told their partners and it did not end well. Men don't like anything they know can threaten them or you can use that might make them feel less of a man. They hear stories about *kayan mata* everywhere and what it is doing to men, especially by these small girls that you use it to steal people's husband, so how will they support you using it? They don't want to lose their place as men, and you must remember that *kayan mata* is very powerful and men know it can make them "boy-boy" [completely subservient] to their wives or female partners (Ronke, 37, female, married, four children).

Most of the men who participated in this research believed that the use of *kayan mata* by their spouses without informing them was a fundamental violation of their rights. It was seen as coercion into loving and caring for your partner when it should indeed be something of a choice. Salami mentioned:

.... the use of *kayan mata* is very complicated not just because it is what women can use to put the head of a man in a bag [potentially a tool for hypnotising men], you know what I mean right? But also because it taints some very fundamental relationship and sexual rights. What do you want to call a woman who uses such substances to lure me not just into loving and caring for her but also to have sexual intercourse with me? Is that not rape in conventional terms? But we do not take it seriously because this is about men and men do not want to look weak, but in reality we are very weak. This *kayan mata* thing controls you and the woman can do practically anything to you. You lose your ability to make decisions for yourself. Is this not wrong? Should this not be checked? Can you imagine the outrage that will be in our society if this was the other way around gender-wise? I keep saying it and people think I am being extreme, but it is important to have a discussion around sexual consent and our natural ability to choose who we desire in the use of *kayan mata* particularly (Salami, 45, male, married, seven children).

Salami's narrative was not just about sexual consent but also reiterated the discussion presented earlier about men being victims of 'dangerous women'. For sex to be consensual, it has to be given freely: implying that sex needs to be engaged in without manipulation, pressure, or under the influence of any substances; reversible: in that partners must have the agency to withdraw their consent at any point; informed: the act must be premeditated, talked about, and agreed upon; enthusiastic: sex requires that both partners are eager and approve all sexual acts they will engage in; and specific: it is important that all acts that are desirable by all partners be

expressly stated and agreed upon (Humphreys and Herold 2007; Beres 2014; Beres and MacDonald 2015). The factors highlighted above basically ensure that sexual agency is understood and expressed without ambiguity; however, it is not usually the case as sexual activities are initiated without deep reflection on agency. Women are often caught within spaces where choices are limited and are often required to abide by social norms and expectations that regulate sexual expression. Ajuwon (2005) argued that unequal gender norms and role expectations expose women to non-consensual sex. Notwithstanding the fact that more women experience non-consensual sex, the use of *kayan mata* presents a new concern around consent in sexual relationships for men. The dilemma is how consent should be understood and engaged in the use of *kayan mata*. From the findings of this study, *kayan mata* comes in different forms and could serve various purposes that could go as far as hypnotising men in some cases. In cases where it is used without the partner's consent, as widely reported by the participants in this study, do we begin to question if consent has been violated?

Advocates of these traditional aphrodisiacs among the women who were interviewed were of the opinion that the sexual rights of the man have not been violated in any way, even though he is kept in the dark about the usage of the aphrodisiac. However, most (married) women believed that *kayan mata* should be strictly for the married as there might be a serious danger if it falls into the hands of wrong and insidious unmarried women ('dangerous women'). Aduni expressed her dissatisfaction with the outcry of men about consent in the use of *kayan mata*. She argued for a level playing ground where all genders have agency to boost their sexuality without consultation. She explained:

This is not the first time I will be engaging in a discussion around consent, especially as it regards the use of *kayan mata*. People always ask me if my man has the right to know I use *kayan mata* and I say no. They follow up by saying that is wrong and it is a violation of his right to decide what happens in his sexual life. While they might have a point, my question to them is, does the man get the consent of his wife/partner before using all those *ponkiriya*, *mokole*, and the rest [traditional aphrodisiacs men use for prolonged erection and to address quick ejaculation]? If men use these things without their partners' consent and no one is making it an issue, I think women should also use whatever they want to use irrespective of the effect. The only challenge I have, like I stated earlier, is that *kayan mata* should be allowed within the confines of marriage alone. It could be disastrous when these young unmarried ladies in skinny skirts get hold of it. They will wreck homes and destroy marriages (Aduni, 45, female, married, five children).

This fear is based on the notion that the powers of *kayan mata* could be used to completely control a man. They also believed that sexual arousal was enough consent and it meant interest/consent on the part of the man. This being said, how do we explain sexual arousal that is stimulated by the use of certain substances and not genuinely from the man? Will it be adequate justification to define consent and will this just not be tantamount to subduing the sexual agency of men? While these questions remain open to critical engagement, the findings from this research suggest that men saw the use of *kayan mata* as a violation of their sexual rights, while women perceived *kayan mata* as an attempt to balance the playing field in the discourse of gender relations.

The discourse on consent in the use of *kayan mata* is undoubtedly complex and complicated but needs to be engaged. As much as individuals are at will to increase the pleasure of their sexual experiences, caution must be exercised not to violate the rights of others in the process. Consent should be taken very seriously and never assumed, it should never be judged by past behaviour, the need to take revenge, to control a partner, and/or to ensure their fidelity. It is also important to change narratives that assume sexual consent based on normative gender expectations, and it should always be clearly communicated.

The discussions presented thus far reflect principles and could be compared to the strategies discussed earlier in this thesis as highlighted by WAF. WAF models argue that women's empowerment in Africa will require a systematic approach that bears with it complementarity and communality, negotiation, compromise, shared values, and collaboration, as well as accommodation and cooperation. Interestingly, women's narratives and the debates that emanated from the use of *kayan mata* as discussed thus far in this chapter speak to some of these values. Hence, the discussion has been about what empowerment is to these women, why they seek empowerment, and some of the strategies they adopt in the pursuit of this goal. The discourse on empowerment has been brought to the fore alongside sexual agency, the need for recognition, and occupying a position of importance or significance in intimate relationships.

The focus on women's empowerment as described by both married and unmarried women reveals that personal liberation in the intimate terrain is a major motivating factor for women's use of *kayan mata*. These women desire to claim 'agency'; something they described in its simplest form as gaining a position of recognition and significance within intimate relationships and families. To achieve this end, women in this study revealed that they adopted *kayan mata* in a bid to enhance sexual pleasure, to stimulate love and bonding between partners, and to boost their sexual confidence; all in an attempt to ensure men's fidelity, claim agency,

and empower themselves. It is believed that a woman who has been able to claim power over her sexual being – her body – can to a large extent begin to negotiate her position within other areas of intimate relationships and the family at large. Hence, at the foundation of this empowerment journey is claiming sexual agency. The priority placed on sexual liberty, freedom, and rights is very significant for how these women negotiate their space within patriarchal family spaces and it is also fundamental for understanding the concerns that men raised in the study, as was discussed in the previous chapter. While these women perceived sexual agency as important for empowerment and liberation from limiting patriarchal norms, most of the men believed it encouraged permissive/unregulated sexual behaviour among women.

Furthermore, to achieve the aim of empowerment, one of the strategies following women's use of *kayan mata* is prioritising male sexuality. Without giving this much thought, it may seem like another measure that limits women since these women placed a great deal of emphasis on satisfying their husbands' sexual desires; however, a critical analysis and further discussion with these women revealed that they used the satisfaction of their partners' sexual desires as a non-aggressive medium to get across to them and better negotiate their interests. This is very consistent with the argument of WAF that across cultures in most African nations, women have historically adopted non-aggressive strategies to accommodate, tolerate, and cooperate with men in a bid to achieve their own goals. This approach is usually based on subtleness, wisdom, and dynamism. It is important to note that unlike most WAF models that advocate for a non-aggressive approach in the pursuit of women's empowerment, women's use of *kayan mata* is not always subtle as it is considered an unusual and disruptive measure that threatens normative gender relations within intimate relationships. This is discussed further in the next chapter. While *kayan mata* operates within a very complex and competitive space, it is undoubtedly an unusual approach that the women in this study adopted to occupy significant positions of influence within their relationships and families and it often required compromise, give and take, conciliatory relations, and sometimes disruptive measures.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The use of *kayan mata* was discovered to have an effect on sexual relationships. For women, it is a source of empowerment that increases sexual confidence, guarantees sexual agency, and makes women more assertive. However, the narrative around sexual agency and assertiveness is quite complex. There are competing ideologies among women on what agency is, and how

and to what extent women should claim agency in intimate relationships and families. One of the groups believed that women's freedom and empowerment are desirable but within the normative framework of gender expectations. Hence, a woman should enjoy a certain liberty but not negate her hegemonic feminine responsibilities as a good mother and submissive wife. This also implies that women should not desire agency that will threaten the place of a man.

Conversely, some other women believed that prolonged subjugation of women within intimate relationships and families had silenced their voices and denied their agency. As such, the social systems that make women's agency invisible must be challenged and transformed. *Kayan mata* is therefore seen as a very important tool to unseat the unequal social structures that limit women's agency within intimate domains. While this group was quite dominant, their actions are perceived as hostile, abusive, and dangerous to men. All the men who participated in this study expressed great fear of the dangers that these 'dangerous women' could cause. Some of the dangers include the emasculation of men and the destruction of the 'traditional' gender relations hierarchy.

Interestingly, the critical engagement of the findings of this study revealed that most of the women interviewed in this study prioritised male sexuality above their own. Moreover, this is also connected to various gender roles that see men's sexual gratification as an important part of their masculinity. Most of the women interviewed in this study, while talking about the reasons why they used *kayan mata*, noted that it was for the sexual pleasure of their spouses. While this was a primary motivation, deeper reflection on these narratives revealed that it moved from using *kayan mata* for men's sexual pleasure to using it as a tool to wrestle for power and claim agency in intimate domains. *Kayan mata* therefore becomes a strategy to capture male sexuality for women's advantage. *Kayan mata* was also discussed as a powerful tool that women use for negotiation in the politics of the household.

There is also a serious debate on sexual arousal, sexual consent, and sexual rights. The fear of hypnosis, control, and relinquishing the authority within the intimate familial domain to women raised many issues for men, and consent was one of them. All the men interviewed in this study believed that women's use of *kayan mata* without the knowledge of their spouse was a violation of their fundamental right to bodily integrity. This debate is highly polarised as most women felt that it was not important to inform their spouses of the measures they were taking to improve their sexuality. Be that as it may, this was evident in the study that men did not want women to use *kayan mata* because of its effects and for the fear of being abused.

CHAPTER SIX

Summary of Key Findings and Theoretical Conclusion

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study provided an understanding of women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs and their influence on sexual agency and sexuality in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. By extending the conversation on the use of aphrodisiacs beyond medical concerns with the stimulation of sexual intercourse, this study aimed to understand the broader effects of women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs on their intimate relationships and within their familial and marital contexts. This allowed for the exploration of alternative narratives of heterosexual women's sexuality by examining how the use of these aphrodisiacs influences intimacy and the dynamics of personal and gendered relationships in Ilorin, Nigeria. I argued that the use of traditional aphrodisiacs is one of the various strategies that women adopt in the course of attempting to sustain their marriages/relationships and build stronger intimate and familial bonds.

In keeping with other research, this study showed that married women often see themselves as being locked in a competitive space where they must ensure the fidelity of their partners, usually for the economic security of their children, and a need to keep their marriage unbroken. In polygynous homes, the competition between co-wives is an important factor that drives the use of *kayan mata*; even within monogamous unions, women are pressured to ensure that their husbands are not engaging in extramarital affairs. Either for children's economic security, ensuring men's fidelity, increasing sexual pleasure, or preserving marriages and relationships, women within the study context live in complex and complicated intimate environments that are characterised by infidelity and competition between co-wives, girlfriends, and concubines that breed insecurity and distrust. Many of the participants argued that inequities in the personal/intimate domain are one of the key areas that have disempowered women throughout history and persist to disempower them today; hence, strategies such as the use of traditional aphrodisiacs are aimed at empowering women, and enabling them to assert their agency. Interestingly, the agency in this context is dynamic and complicated. Finally, the use of the qualitative methodology in this study allowed for a broad understanding of the use of traditional aphrodisiacs and an unhindered exploration of the participants' experiences.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the key findings of this study. After providing a succinct description of the essential findings, the chapter proceeds to a critical discussion of the relationships between the findings and the tenets of the theoretical frameworks adopted in this research. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin and its influences on their sexual agency and sexuality. The chapter ends with a number of recommendations for further research.

6.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Kayan mata is a group of traditional aphrodisiacs used by women to increase sexual pleasure and for sexual stimulation within marriages in Northern Nigeria. As a practice that has survived over five centuries, it has become more popular and is gaining empirical attention as a possible medium through which women wrestle with normative social structures, cultural gender ideologies, and orthodoxies that regulate sex and sexuality. Aside from the fact that *kayan mata* disrupts normative sexual ideologies and familial/intimate relational processes, it is important to examine how this disruption of normative sexual ideologies is reshaping women's lives in intimate relationships. In addition, this study also highlighted similar and interrelated forms of femininities and perceived forms of emasculation that might be found in Ilorin. This study brought to the fore narratives that suggested that the use of *kayan mata* is reshaping gender relations within intimate relationships and altering the normative understanding of the feminine. In order to understand this practice, the use of traditional aphrodisiacs was examined within the broader lens of sexuality. The discussion therefore moved beyond the enhancement of intimate sexual relations to examining ways in which the use of aphrodisiacs affects other areas of women's lives and sexuality. This study aimed to fill this gap by providing alternative narratives on how sexual relations augmented with the aid of traditional aphrodisiacs are repositioning women within intimate relationships and familial spaces.

Kayan mata is one of the most popular types of traditional aphrodisiacs used by women in Ilorin. It consists of several products that serve varying purposes; from sexual enhancement stimulants to body beautifying products to enhance sexuality. Even though these aphrodisiacs are well known among women in the region and country at large, women's use of these products is often very hidden and personal. It was also brought to the fore that *kayan mata* is regarded as very important for enhancing sexual functions, fertility, and women's ability to negotiate power/influence in intimate relationships. Moreover, these are very popular

aphrodisiacs that cut across different age groups and social class in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria.

Several types of *kayan mata* products were identified in this study and they are generally applied through oral intake, vaginal applications, and body decorations. Irrespective of the mode of application, many women believe in the efficacy of these products. In addition, social networking and informal marketing are the most popular routes for sourcing, marketing, and selling *kayan mata* products in Ilorin. Wedding and naming ceremonies, women's meetings, and other gatherings that bring women together are the avenues that women utilise to inform themselves about various *kayan mata* products and their efficiency.

The practice and consumption of various traditional aphrodisiacs and *kayan mata* in particular as observed in this study revealed that food, body, and sexuality are closely related. This further substantiates claims in the literature that nutrition forms a very important aspect of sexuality. Food is therefore a very important mechanism for enhancing and recovering sexual virility. It is used to initiate, entice, and lure people into sex; and a common strategy within most households used by women to persuade their husbands to do their biddings. The food we consume is deeply related to our sensual desires. In addition, body images and sexuality also share a very close relationship. As identified in this study, certain types of *kayan mata* products are used for body beautification. These adornments could be in the form of scarification and wearing beads and jewellery. It is used to enhance a woman's sexual aura and to make her more desirable to her partner. These practices hold strong and sentimental values that are significant for sexuality expression in Ilorin and form a significant part of *kayan mata* culture.

Some of the reasons articulated for women's use of *kayan mata* in Ilorin include the need to enhance sexual pleasure and satisfaction, as a negotiating tool within the politics of the household, for bonding in relationships, increasing happiness, and deepening love and commitment between spouses. These goals are achieved through the consumption of herbal mixtures that enhance sexual prowess and beautify the body. Many of the study participants believed that *kayan mata* is used to ensure family stability and relationship satisfaction, and to give women some recognition in their relationships. The narrative that *kayan mata* empowers women and gives them agency within intimate relationships was resounding and fundamental for most of the participants. This is premised on the notion that women are not always an equal partner within a relationship, as it is observable that men were usually more dominant – given the persistence of patriarchal structures. As such, women's desire to participate in the decision-

making processes of their relationships and to claim agency over their body and sexuality are very fundamental in the discourse of *kayan mata*. *Kayan mata* has become one of the strategies adopted by these women to challenge limiting patriarchal structures that inhibit women in their spaces.

Amidst this conversation is the idea that the normative meaning of femininity is being altered as women have become more assertive and controlling. The participants therefore gave descriptions of emerging forms of femininities that were very similar in their manifestations. In addition, there is also a category of women referred to more regularly as ‘sexual entrepreneurs’. This group of women is believed to use *kayan mata* to entice wealthy men, initiate sex, and gain financial resources from them. Another emergent issue from this discussion is the fact that women’s underlying motivation to use *kayan mata* is firstly the priority they place on men’s sexuality, especially satisfying their virile sexual urges to keep them faithful and committed in a relationship. These women are argued to not only place the man’s sexual needs above their own, but also take up the responsibility of helping the man tame his ‘excessive libido’, which helps to ensure men’s fidelity within relationships. Interestingly, a critical reflection and further engagement with the participants revealed that this priority on male sexuality is a strategy and a means to an end for these women. It became evident that the use of *kayan mata* has progressed beyond increasing sexual pleasure and ensuring men’s fidelity within some contexts to claiming power and control in relationships. As stated earlier, this new inclination among women is perceived as dangerous to the stability of families/marriages/relationships and threatens hegemonic masculinity.

Another emerging issue in the discourse of women’s use of *kayan mata* in Ilorin is the political-economic aspect of the phenomenon. As it influences women’s sexuality, it also brings to the fore an engaging conversation around the commodification of sexual politics. This is through the series of negotiations observable in initiating sex within the gender relation processes of intimate relationships. Another form of such commodification is the sporadic demand and supply market that has been created with the prevalence of *kayan mata*. Even though it is practised in the hidden, the economic potential of the demand and supply of *kayan mata* products is booming, according to the sellers interviewed.

Although the use of *kayan mata* was discussed as an age-old practice that has survived for approximately five centuries in Northern Nigeria, its contemporary resurgence is more complex and dynamic. Historically, it used to be an aphrodisiac that formed an important part

of the sexual culture of Northern Nigeria and is generally used within the confines of marriage. However, the discussion presented in this thesis brings to the fore fundamental issues eminent in the use of *kayan mata* as a traditional aphrodisiac in Ilorin. The findings revealed that *kayan mata* is considered a very important sexual enhancement strategy for building relationships on the one hand but also as a consciously disruptive strategy adopted by both married and unmarried women to unsettle several sexual taboos, assumptions, and stereotypes within the terrain of intimacy and relationships in Nigeria on the other hand.

One of the most important facts revealed by the narratives of the participants in this study is that women are becoming bolder in talking about, exploring, and claiming agency over their sexual lives. The conservative culture and proclivity to avoid sexual discussions within the public domain are weakening as both women and men are exploring various aspects of their sexual being and engaging publicly. This has, however, led to various debates around the culture of morality within the country. For instance, all the men interviewed in this study were of the opinion that the use of *kayan mata* and other aphrodisiacs of this nature are potentially capable of breeding what they described as women who are capable of abuse. This group of women are argued to be capable of controlling men because of the hypnotic effects of some *kayan mata* products and their perceived controlling abilities. This has led to various controversies and debates in the pretence of a need to curtail the commercialisation of sexual pleasure and ensuring morality and sexual sanctity in Nigeria. However, a critical examination of the controversy shows that it is patriarchal outrage at a perceived strategy that gives women substantial agency and at the same time threatens masculine dominance.

This study revealed that one of the issues that emanates from the discourse of *kayan mata* is the view that aphrodisiacs are used in the interest of serving male sexuality. Even though the majority of the women interviewed in this study used *kayan mata* to claim agency within intimate relationships and familial contexts, it was also noted that some women opted to use *kayan mata* in a bid to satisfy the sexual pleasures of their partners, without paying more attention to their own. This group of women desired sexual agency but within the confines of normative gender ideologies; they conformed to the idea that women should be subservient, submissive, and obedient within intimate relationships and families. While this might indirectly reproduce patriarchy and male hegemony, these women still noted that they would not inform their partners that they were using *kayan mata*, thus effectively working around constraints in an effort to improve their situations.

Social media and various community networks and gatherings have become an important avenue for women to share and learn about this revolutionising strategy of *kayan mata*. With this strategy, women are able to circumvent normative structures of control and moral regulations on their sexuality. Essentially, the use of *kayan mata* by women has inspired a new confidence among women that have made them not ashamed/limited in the exploration of their sexuality and in engaging men both within familial contexts and broader society. At the base of some of these concerns regarding women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs is the fact that it distorts primary gender roles that could potentially affect the conception of masculinity, femininity, and gender relational processes within families. Critics of *kayan mata*, who are predominantly men, believe that gender role conformity and performance are some of the crucial ways of ensuring the functionality and survival of the family institution. Hence, women are expected to perform certain roles that are usually domestic, and men are expected to perform theirs, which are often instrumental, such as making decisions that affect everyone within the home. With the use of *kayan mata*, this has become more complicated and fluid as women are now more agentic and can negotiate their place and position not just in relation to decision making within their families but generally about their role in the home. These issues conflict gender relations within families and intimate relationships. Closely related to this is the belief that young unmarried women could take advantage of the powerful effects of *kayan mata* to lure usually wealthy men into romantic relationships that could potentially affect their families. This is believed to create a competitive and conflicting relationship between married and unmarried women. Most of the married women interviewed viewed young unmarried women as competitors who could potentially damage family ties between married partners. Hence, *kayan mata* in the wrong hands (some young unmarried women) could produce a group of women who could aggravate tension, abuse, conflict, and fragmentation within families.

Furthermore, the place of consent within the use of *kayan mata* is another crucial issue that emerged as complicated in this study. Because of the nature of these traditional aphrodisiacs and their claimed effects (hypnotising, controlling, and giving women an advantage in relationships), women usually use *kayan mata* in the hidden and often without the knowledge of their partners. In fact, most of the women interviewed in this study mentioned that their partners did not know that they used *kayan mata*; the men also highlighted that they would not consent to their partners' use of *kayan mata*. This raises serious concerns about the place of trust within intimate relationships, marriages, and families.

The inter-regional and popular use of aphrodisiacs such as *kayan mata* is strongly connected to the broader social, economic, and political context of Nigeria. From a social point of view, one of the contributing factors to the resurgent use of *kayan mata* and its inter-regional spread is the new forms of complications and complexities that characterise the family institution. Insecurities and distrust building on relationship infidelity and extramarital affairs have produced different forms of intimate relations – from girlfriends to male friends, to baby mamas and baby daddies – among several other complications. Closely related to this, and a consequence of the complexities of the family structure, are changing gender roles and values. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the nature of gender roles is changing as the distribution of responsibilities and the performance of roles are becoming less rigid. The narratives of the women captured in this thesis revealed that they are beginning to embrace new roles that are not normatively assigned to them and new gender relation values are evolving. For instance, they are more intentional and unashamed to embrace and engage in matters relating to their sexuality. This is one of the reasons why women are currently bolder in the exploration of their sexuality in Nigeria than in the past.

Providing substantial support for access to these traditional aphrodisiacs is the global support that traditional medicine has gained over the years as a vital aspect of health provision. The recognition and acceptance of traditional medicine as a vital aspect of healthcare and ensuring wellbeing led to a sporadic increase in various traditional alternatives for treating illnesses and diseases and ensuring wellbeing. Overshadowing orthodox Viagra are various traditional sexual stimulants such as *kayan mata* that are readily accessible and cheaper in some cases. Moreover, the challenges with the regulation of drug sales in Nigeria, especially curtailing over-the-counter drug sales, exposes people to medications that are not duly vetted or licensed. This gap allows various drugs, including varying types of aphrodisiacs (traditional and orthodox), to be readily available to the Nigerian populace (Awodele et al. 2014).

The political-economic nature of the growth and spread of these aphrodisiacs is also very relevant to this discussion. Changing gender roles and enhanced desire to explore one's sexuality have created a booming market for various aphrodisiacs and sex toys in Nigeria. The need to meet this demand has produced a market and an economic opportunity for sex therapists and various entrepreneurs in the sector. As an economic crisis looms in Nigeria, hunger, deprivation, lack, and want are on the increase and affect every sector of the nation, with women hit the hardest because they are more dominant at the bottom of the economic ladder. Even though Nigeria has witnessed some significant improvements in the representation of

women in economic and political institutions, the gap is still significant. The implication of this economic crisis is that people have become responsible for fending for themselves in a situation where resources are very scarce and sparsely distributed. The discussion presented earlier in this thesis that the use of *kayan mata* is believed to be creating a group of women who are capable of abusing men by leveraging sex as an entrepreneurial tool is very significant in this context. Several women, especially young unmarried women, as highlighted in the discussion chapters, believe that *kayan mata* is the gateway to unlocking their financial freedom. This group of women noted that in a situation where unemployment is very high and people can hardly survive, young unmarried women in particular and women in general are using sex with the aid of *kayan mata* to collect money and other resources from wealthy men. Desperation, hunger, lack, and a dire need for survival are very crucial factors that drive the exchange of sex for material, financial, and social benefits in this context. Sex has therefore become a means to an end in the face of intense economic recession for some women. This sexual exchange reflects asymmetrical power relations between men and women in intimate relationships; these women use *kayan mata* as a measure to occupy a higher position of influence within these relationships. In the next section, I provide theoretical engagement with the finding of the study.

6.3 THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS: ADVANCING A NUANCED UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S USE OF TRADITIONAL APHRODISIACS

This study examined women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs in the broader context of sexuality to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between sexual enhancement and power dynamics in intimate relationships within the study location. To examine how women's sexual politics relate to relational dynamics within intimate relationships, there was a need to study these traditional aphrodisiacs beyond sexual enhancement. African feminist theorisation and the social exchange theory formed the theoretical lens in terms of which this study was designed. This was to examine if some of the arguments made by some African feminists that women across cultures in Africa have historically used various strategies and approaches to empower themselves and navigate patriarchal mines suffice within this context. Considering the fact that the use of these traditional aphrodisiacs is popular within intimate relationships and it is debated to be related to women's desire to claim agency, WAF models provide a relevant theoretical frame to examine women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs in Ilorin. Some of the women in this study

advanced a particular form of feminism similar to snail-sense feminism, where normative gender ideologies are subtly challenged without disrupting the overall gender order. In addition, the social exchange theory was adopted to understand how sex is used as a means to an end in intimate relationships. It helps to understand how sexual exchange(s) can be negotiated and brings to the fore the power relations inherent in these negotiations. This study has shown that in order to understand women's use of various traditional aphrodisiacs, they must be examined in relation to women's sexuality and other aspects of power relations within familial spaces.

6.3.1 Theorising the use of *kayan mata* beyond common narratives: Popular perceptions and implications

This study examined common narratives about women's use of *kayan mata* in Ilorin. Understanding the motivations that drive the popularity and use of these traditional aphrodisiacs by women in intimate relationships in Ilorin was important. Interestingly, several factors were revealed. *Kayan mata* is regarded as a source of sexual pleasure and satisfaction. To these women, the enhancement of sexual intercourse is to achieve purposes that are connected to leveraging sexually satisfying a man. Such purposes include ensuring a partner's fidelity, ensuring that he is committed to the relationship, and gaining some influence/power over him. Part of the belief system and practice is that these sexual aphrodisiacs tighten the vagina orifice and, as such, makes sex more pleasurable for men.

While married women consider the tightness of the vagina orifice as essential after childbirth to give their partners a pleasurable sexual experience, young and unmarried women believed that a slackened/loose vagina implied promiscuity. They therefore used *kayan mata* to tighten their vagina to make them close to being virgins (but not virgins); in this way, their partners are made to believe that they are responsible, non-promiscuous, and virtuous.

Kayan mata is used as a tool for negotiation in the politics of the household. Co-wives in polygynous marriages draw on *kayan mata* as a resource to outperform other wives. The belief is that the woman who has more sexual powers over the man has the advantage to manipulate the resources of the household in favour of herself and her children. In monogamous marriages, it is used to manage structures that usually seek to control wives in their marriages; for instance, mother-in-law or relative crises. This further substantiates arguments of snail-sense and nego-feminism. These two WAF models argue that women across various cultures in West Africa

through wisdom, patience, understanding, complementarity, and compromise, among others, negotiate patriarchal terrains. These women are ultimately concerned with increasing their access to power within familial spaces and society at large.

Interestingly, most of the effects of *kayan mata* as described by the women (ensuring men's fidelity, an advantageous tool for outperforming other wives in polygynous relationships, and a crisis-management mechanism in monogamous marriages) are only possible because women believe that *kayan mata* bonds partners together and brings happiness to a relationship. This further substantiates the argument of social exchange theorists that sexual satisfaction is very important for overall relationship satisfaction. Hence, the stronger the bond between partners, the more committed they are to their relationship. Relationship bonding is related to sexual satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction is seen as an integral part of overall relationship satisfaction. These perceptions are among the driving forces for the use of *kayan mata* among women in Ilorin. They are considered very essential for women's relationship experiences and the foundation for building a loving, committed intimate affair.

The motivations discussed in this section also provided insight into other substantial issues that emanated from the use of *kayan mata* as relating to sexual agency, empowerment, and sexuality. In addition, examining the narratives of some participants who related the use of traditional aphrodisiacs to religion further strengthened the arguments in the literature that there is a strong relationship between cultural sexual practices and religious beliefs in some parts of Africa. References made to the wives of Prophet Mohammed of the Islamic religion who used *kayan mata* is an attempt to justify a narrative that some of these women hold in high esteem. However, it intersects with the patriarchal sexual cultural narrative that prioritises men's sexual desire. The justification by these women is that the use of aphrodisiacs if only to satisfy their husbands' sexual needs is culturally and religiously acceptable. Moreover, the findings of this study revealed that despite satisfying the sexual needs of their spouses, these women also satisfied their personal sexual, material, emotional, and familial needs. These popular perceptions are actually motivations for the continued use of *kayan mata* among married/unmarried women in Ilorin. A deeper analysis revealed that there is a nexus between food, body, and sexuality in the (re)production of this vital sexual cultural practice.

In addition, the narratives revealed that aphrodisiacs have become strategies that women use in the hidden, in disguise, and some explicitly to empower themselves sexually and socially in intimate relationships, families, and society.

6.3.2 Understanding ‘agency’ and ‘empowerment’ as nuanced concepts in the discourse of *kayan mata* in Ilorin

One of the most important and popular narratives about the use of *kayan mata* by married and unmarried women in Ilorin interviewed in this study was the desire to claim agency in intimate/familial relationships. In addition, there is a popular belief that it empowers women and liberates them from limiting practices and gender norms, as well as disempowering social structures. Furthermore, there is a popular belief that it is a traditional strategy for unsettling gender normativity that privileges men in intimate relationships in Nigeria and a source of agentic power and audaciousness for women in familial terrains. While these beliefs were held in utmost regard by most participants in this study, a critical analysis of their experiences and narratives revealed several complexities, border-crossing, and ambivalences in their conceptualisation of agency. This implies that the meaning of agency, be it sexual or personal, has become very fragmented. Most of the women interviewed related agency to ‘power’, which is practically the ability to exercise ‘control’ in a relationship. Power is viewed as a resource that is exclusively part of the privileges that men enjoy in intimate relationships; therefore, the first point of departure from subjugating practices that limit women is to claim the power that men enjoy. The use of *kayan mata* is therefore seen as part of the agentic measures that women employ in intimate relationships to become empowered.

There are, however, ambivalences about the nature of empowerment and the agentic practices described. Interestingly, the most prevalent motivation for the use of *kayan mata* as observed from the narratives of these women was not initially as an agentic measure but rather as a tool to satisfy men’s ‘virile’ sexual desires and pleasure. In fact, some women noted that the empowerment they sought was not to the point where it emasculated their partner. These narratives speak to the perception of agency within a cultural gendered hierarchy. Notwithstanding, these women’s agency represented an interesting phenomenon since the typical definition of agency is characterised by intention and autonomy. Theorising agency from the context of autonomy and intention broadens the notion of agency within the discourse of women’s use of *kayan mata*. This is because, despite the fact that some of them understood empowerment within the confines of gendered cultural boundaries, they were able to subvert, resist, and, in some cases, use these gender constructs to their own advantage. This study therefore conceptualised agency as a complex phenomenon that requires a nuanced understanding.

The study showed that women in the research believed that *kayan mata* enhanced sex as a tool for women's empowerment; through these enhanced sexual experiences, women were able to address unequal power relations in intimate relationships and families. Hence, the desire to satisfy the sexual pleasure of men is not to prioritise male sexuality over their own but to use it as an opportunity to control and manipulate gender relation processes. This power is described as being assertive, being able to influence decisions, and to express opinions freely without the fear of being shut down or ignored based on gender.

6.3.3 Critiquing the notion of 'dangerous women' and its implications for women's sexuality in the use of *kayan mata*

The use of *kayan mata* occupies a very controversial space within public debate in Nigeria. As part of the study, I sought to understand the perceptions of men about women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs; while they also shared some positive thoughts about how effective it was in ensuring men's fidelity and enhancing commitment, love, and overall relationship harmony, they expressed concerns. One of the most fundamental narratives was that *kayan mata* is potentially a tool for hypnotising men. It therefore gives women undue advantage to control and manipulate men. In addition, some women also shared this concern as most married women believed that the use of *kayan mata* by young unmarried women was dangerous for families and marriages. It is very common for young unmarried women to use these products to initiate and lure men into sexual relationships to extort financial and material resources from them. However, the most desired targets for this purpose are married and wealthy men. Both men and married women believed that the hypnotising effects of *kayan mata* can be used to subjugate and control men.

Men's narratives of *kayan mata* revealed that it is perceived as a practice that distorts the cultural fundamentals of gender relations. This includes unsettling taboos, orthodoxies, stereotypes, and assumptions about sex, sexual behaviour, and gender relation processes in intimate/familial relationships. Interestingly, for these men *kayan mata* had become a tool for women to circumvent cultural structures and moral regulations that guard women's sexuality, especially in relation to men. Some of these *kayan mata* products are therefore seen as *juju* and immoral because their use contravenes sexual gender normativity. This study found that labelling *kayan mata* as dangerous, as observed in the narratives of most of the men, was motivated by the perception that it is threatening to hegemonic masculinity and the patriarchal system in general. Socio-cultural normativity within this study's context accentuates

masculinity through dominance and influence, as explained in the literature review. As such, several men desire to achieve this status of manliness by controlling others, which in this case are usually women in intimate heterosexual relationships. The threat to this position of privilege and control is directly perceived as a threat to masculinity. The maintenance, sustenance, and reproduction of this dominant gender power structure thrives on a system that objectifies and places women in a secondary position in the hierarchy of power.

Kayan mata's hypnotising effects fuel the fears described above. All the men interviewed believed it gave women powers that helped them take up responsibilities that negate the normative description of the feminine. These women become what was described by both men and married women in this study as 'dangerous women'. She is controlling, assertive, and potentially has the power to abuse and exploit a man. This category of women is not 'submissive'; they are more 'controlling' and not 'respectful' within intimate relationships. On the contrary, women believed that the use of traditional aphrodisiacs such as *kayan mata* was a leveller that gave men and women an opportunity to engage equally in decision-making processes within the intimate familial terrain.

6.3.4 Theorising the transactional nature of sex in the practice of *kayan mata*

One of the objectives of this study was to examine how the use of *kayan mata* / traditional aphrodisiacs could be producing multiple notions of femininities in Ilorin. While there are very engaging descriptions of what it means to be feminine (some of which are described in the previous section, such as controlling and assertive women), relating women's sexuality to entrepreneurship was very insightful for how sex could be commodified, exchanged, and used as a means to an end. It also brings into context the arguments of the social exchange theory. Examining sexual politics within intimate relationships as described by the participants shows that there is a sexual revolution that has intensified discussions and debates around women's empowerment and freedom in the study milieu. These very complex but similar forms of femininities are changing narratives about what it means to be feminine. Sexual entrepreneurs are described as constituted by a group of women who have become 'sexually free' to the point where sex can be transacted. This phenomenon further complicates the understanding of women's empowerment and sexual agency. While these women believed the use of *kayan mata* have made it easier for women to publicly have conversations about self-expression and sexual pleasure, this study argues that it is important to examine how it might be reproducing assumptions that objectify and commodify women's bodies. The women in this study who used

kayan mata as leverage in a sexual transaction were primarily responding to harsh socio-economic conditions within the country, but at the same time empowering themselves in the process. The discussion of the women popularly described as sexual entrepreneurs by the participants was presented in relation to transactional sex through the lens of the social exchange theory. This is because these women are believed to sell their bodies for sex and, in doing so, they used *kayan mata* as an advantage to control men and extort resources (financial, social class, and status) from them. While several of the women interviewed attested to the fact that they engaged in sexual exchanges and used *kayan mata* because it helped them get wealthy men who can meet their financial needs, their narratives further showed that it was an avenue for the empowerment of several women. Moreover, I argue that in some cases ‘sexual entrepreneurship’ might not be a reflection of women’s claim of agency and empowerment in sexual relationships as perceived by some of these women, but might rather be another phenomenon that creates feminine subjects through the objectification and commodification of women’s sexuality. In addition, it is reproducing strong patriarchal assumptions that perceive a woman’s body as a site of sexual pleasure and satisfaction. Interestingly, the assumption that ‘sexual entrepreneurs’ are empowered women was quite prevalent among the study participants. This study therefore recommends the need for a broader understanding and interpretation of sexual agency and empowerment.

6.3.5 Sexual rights or sexual rights violation? Negotiating sexual consent in the discourse of *kayan mata*

One of the fundamental issues that emanated from the study in relation to women’s use of *kayan mata*, especially as it affects gender relation processes between sexes in intimate relationships, was ‘consent’. As discussed earlier in this thesis, despite the fact that *kayan mata* is a popular phenomenon that is known and acknowledged by most people within the study setting, it is practised by most women in the hidden, especially where sexual matters are not openly discussed. Even in less conservative areas like Ilorin, most of the women interviewed in this study used *kayan mata* products without the knowledge of their partners. While consent is the mutual agreement between partners to participate in sexual activities with free will to stop engagement by both or either of the partners without repercussion, the use of *kayan mata* as described by all the women in this study negated this fundamental essential element of defining consent.

This study argues that understanding consent and ensuring that it is not violated are also very important for overall relationship satisfaction and stability. Flowing from the description of *kayan mata* as an aphrodisiac that not only enhances sexual intercourse but could also hypnotise the man, obtaining the consent of the partner before using such an aphrodisiac becomes very essential. Most women, while describing the hidden nature of the practice, highlighted that their partners could not be aware because finding out would raise trust issues in their relationship. Upon inquiring why these women did not want their partners to know that they used these aphrodisiacs, their responses revolved around the strong effects of *kayan mata* and the popular perception that it emasculates men and gives women roles that are in contradiction to their cultural gender responsibilities.

This study argues that consent needs to be discussed in the use of *kayan mata* and other traditional aphrodisiacs. Irrespective of the fact that individuals are at will to stimulate their sexual experience and pleasure, it is crucial to remember that sexual acts often transcend a person and operate within the confines of a group. As such, recognising the rights of partners in sexually stimulating activities that also affect them is very essential. Consent is complex and is seldom given in the use of *kayan mata*. It is also important to change narratives that assume sexual consent based on normative gender expectations; it should always be clearly communicated. Ironically, while ‘consent’ has been a demand of feminists striving to condemn violent men, in this case women are being criticised for subjecting men to processes that they had not consented to.

6.4 FINAL REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study showed that women use traditional aphrodisiacs (*kayan mata*) for purposes other than sexual stimulation, to include power negotiation within intimate relationships and familial terrains. This shift in the normative idea of what aphrodisiacs represent opens up a new conversation around their alternative utilities. Amidst this is the idea that women use *kayan mata* for reasons connected to power negotiation within intimate and familial terrains. The notion that *kayan mata* empowers women and gives them agency within relationships is a force that continues to drive the use and prevalence of these aphrodisiacs in Ilorin. This study, however, argues that the forms of empowerment and agency that are experienced by these women as described require a nuanced understanding. It argues that while the use of these traditional aphrodisiacs might be empowering for some women, for others it might be a phenomenon that reproduces normative gender stereotypes about women and their sexuality.

The study provided evidence that supports the argument that the use of these traditional aphrodisiacs stems beyond sexual enhancement to issues relating to power and agency within intimate relationships, as noted earlier. Interestingly, this is altering gender relations not just within intimate relationships but also within the familial terrain. In other words, to understand this dynamism, it is important to know what types of aphrodisiacs these women use, for what purposes, the motivations underlying the usage, and its impacts on their sexual behaviours and sexuality. Hence, this study argues that there is a relationship between these sexual practices and power structures within intimate relationships. Food, body, and sexuality are related and interconnected in the use of *kayan mata* and it has become a sexual culture that is reshaping women's lives and experiences.

In addition, this study argues that sexual agency is very complex and often understood from a subjective point of view. Within the context of this study, it was discussed closely with women's empowerment. Most of the women interviewed believed that the use of *kayan mata* gave them control over their sexual and social lives. It enhanced their placement within a relationship and family. Notwithstanding, it was noted that the forms of empowerment that these women described embodied normative gendered narratives. For instance, several of these women described a situation where they desired to be empowered sexually, socially, economically, and politically, but not to the point where they threatened the masculine position of their spouses. The agency that was often described is one that operates within the normative structure of patriarchy. Women who used *kayan mata* as a resource to seduce men and collect money from them also believed they were empowered and liberated. These women believed that the agency they had to do whatever they desired with their bodies was symbolic of women's empowerment and progress. However, as part of theorising a broader understanding of 'agency' and 'empowerment', the study argues that these practices might be (re)producing normative assumptions that commodify and objectify women's bodies as a site for sexual pleasure and satisfaction. Future research may benefit from conceptualising 'agency' and 'empowerment' as broad, complex, and sometimes subjective concepts.

Considering the very coy attitude that accompanies conversations around sex and because *kayan mata* operates within a social context that pushes back public engagement or conversations around sex and sexual practices, very little was known about how, when, and why women use *kayan mata* prior to this study. In fact, it has not gained very much sociological or public health attention. As such, this study used qualitative research methods to study women's use of these aphrodisiacs. It allowed for a broader investigation of the phenomenon,

especially understanding how it affects other areas of women's lives. As such, the study provided a detailed empirical account of women's use of *kayan mata* within intimate relationships in Ilorin and how it affected their lives, sexuality, and families. I believe further studies will benefit immensely from using a qualitative approach to study women who use *kayan mata* in other parts of Nigeria.

Various issues emerged as pressing concerns in the discourse of women's use of *kayan mata* in Ilorin. One of the major concerns is that *kayan mata* has hypnotising powers. A major concern for theoretical engagement is that the use of this aphrodisiac prioritises male sexuality and, as such, could be reaffirming assumptions that over-sexualise women and representations of women. Furthermore, while the use of *kayan mata* is considered beneficial for families when used within the confines of marriages and between couples, the use of *kayan mata* by young unmarried women is perceived as potentially dangerous for marriages and family stability. The combined effect of the hypnotising nature of *kayan mata* and its prevalence among young unmarried women, regarded as 'sexual entrepreneurs', is quite unsettling for several men who believe it is abusive to men and a threat to masculinity. Interestingly, sexual consent emerged as a concern for the men who participated in this study. The use of *kayan mata*, especially as a hidden practice among women, is seen as a violation of their sexual rights and needs urgent attention. A detailed examination of this concern revealed that the belief that *kayan mata* threatens hegemonic masculinity is a fundamental motivation for this concern. Most of the male participants noted that considering the effects of *kayan mata* as an aphrodisiac that goes beyond enhancing sexual intercourse to relations of powers and control, its usage needs to be regulated so that it does not lead to abuse.

Interestingly, this research opened new conversations about women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs. It explored the use of *kayan mata* beyond sexual pleasures and repositioned it as an essential part of sexuality that relates to power.

Future research might contribute significantly to empirical knowledge by exploring the following areas in depth:

- Exploring the pharmacological composition of *kayan mata* and its implications for women's reproductive health.
- A critical examination of gender status, sexuality, and religion in Nigeria, and its implications for women's use of traditional aphrodisiacs.

- Understanding how ‘secrecy’ in the use of *kayan mata* influences ‘trust’ in intimate relationships in Nigeria.
- Negotiating consent: Evaluating sexual rights in the use of *kayan mata* by women in intimate relationships in Nigeria.
- Women’s use of *kayan mata* in Nigeria and liberatory politics: A critical assessment.
- Exploring the use of *kayan mata* as leverage in transactional sexual relationships in Nigeria.
- Women’s use of *kayan mata* in intimate relationships and its influence on the perception of hegemonic masculinity.

Flowing from the above, while this study investigated the influence of traditional aphrodisiacs on women’s sexuality and sexual behaviour, the need to examine the pharmacological components of these aphrodisiacs becomes very compelling. All throughout the fieldwork, the participants raised concerns about the content/properties of these aphrodisiacs and their effects on the sexual health of women. Vaginal products were of serious concern, because of its nature of application (usually through vaginal insertion or washing). The need to examine whether the properties of these aphrodisiacs are not potentially harmful to this vital part of the body was important to several participants. In fact, one of the women interviewed narrated how she was infected by one of the vaginal products. As more sociological studies investigate the effects of these practices on women’s life and sexuality, it is important to also have research within public health and pharmacy that examines the properties of these aphrodisiacs and their impact on women’s sexual health.

Kayan mata is undoubtedly changing gender relation processes within intimate relationships and the familial terrain and is considered a very vital strategy that several women are beginning to adopt to empower themselves. Notwithstanding, I argue that there is a need to examine these forms of ‘empowerment’ and ‘sexual agency’. While most WAF models in this study, as explained earlier, argue that African women usually adopt goal-orientated, cautious, adaptable, and collaborative measures to tackle patriarchy and empower themselves, the use of *kayan mata* might be salient as described but highly revolutionary and less cooperative. This revolutionary and disruptive nature of *kayan mata* is fundamentally why it has attracted several criticisms. It is perceived as threatening and destabilising cultural normativity about gender roles and responsibilities within intimate relationships and families.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Ethical Clearance



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

13 November 2018

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NUMBER	REC-01-00102-2018
REVIEW OUTCOME	Approved
APPLICANT	Alabi, OJ
TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT	Women's Sexual Agency and Use of Traditional Aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, North Central Nigeria
DEPARTMENT	Sociology
SUPERVISOR/S	Prof K Naidoo Prof I Palmary

Dear Alabi OJ,

The Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee has scrutinised your research proposal and confirm that it complies with the approved ethical standards of the Faculty of Humanities; University of Johannesburg.

We I am satisfied that the comments raised in the original submission have been adequately addressed.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Grace Khunou
Chair: Faculty of Humanities REC
Tel: 011 559 3346
Email: gracek@uj.ac.za

Annexure B: Informed Consent Form

Information Sheet /Letter



Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

Ethical Clearance Number: REC-01-00102-2018

My name is Oluwatobi Alabi and I am a student at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. I am conducting research to complete a doctoral degree in the Department of Sociology at this university. My research focuses on **traditional aphrodisiacs and why women in Ilorin, North-Central Nigeria might use them**. I would like to invite you to take part in this study and seek your formal permission to participate in the study in an individual interview that will be held at a convenient time and venue for you. This interview will take between sixty to ninety minutes. Either I or my research assistant will interview you.

This study is conducted with ethical approval of the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Please take note of the following concerning participation in the study:

- 1) Your participation is completely voluntary. You can say no if you wish to not participate. If you agree, you can still decide to stop the interview at any time, for any reason, and without any prejudice.
- 2) Your real name, identity and affiliation will not be revealed in the thesis or transcript. When writing about your response, I will use pseudonyms (substitute names) to protect your identity,
- 3) The interview will be recorded using a digital recording device in order to capture your views correctly during writing. Only I, as the researcher, my research assistant, and my supervisors, Professors Kammila Naidoo and Ingrid Palmay will have access to these recordings and transcripts of them. The recordings and transcripts will be stored in an encrypted storage device for 10 years for legal and ethical purposes.

- 4) There is no compensation for taking part in this research.
- 5) The result will be used to complete a doctoral degree. Furthermore, the result of this study may be disseminated at relevant meetings/conferences such as the annual South African Sociological Association (SASA). The research result could also be published in relevant academic journals.

If you choose to participate in the research study, please detach and keep this information sheet for reference. Also, please read and sign the informed consent form on the next page.

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact me at damilarealabi40@yahoo.com (+27 73 569 8203, +234 80 6308 9036) or my supervisors, Professor Kammila Naidoo at kammilan@uj.ac.za and Professor Ingrid Palmary at ipalmmary@uj.ac.za

Yours Sincerely,

Oluwatobi Alabi



Informed Consent Form for Participation in the Study



Participant Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

Ethical Clearance Number: REC-01-00102-2018

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Please take note of the following concerning participation in the study:

- 1) Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decide to stop the interview at any time, for any reason, and without any prejudice.
- 2) Your real name, identity and affiliation will not be revealed in the thesis or transcript. When writing about your response, I will use pseudonyms (substitute names) to protect your identity,
- 3) The interview will be recorded using a digital recording device in order to capture your views correctly during writing. Only I, as the primary researcher, the interviewer, and my supervisors, Professors Kammila Naidoo and Ingrid Palmayr will have access to these recordings and transcripts of them. The recordings and transcripts will be stored in an encrypted storage device for 10 years for legal and ethical purposes.
- 4) There is no compensation for taking part in this research.
- 5) The result will be used to complete a doctoral degree. Furthermore, the result of this study may be disseminated at relevant meetings/conferences such as the Annual South African Sociological Association (SASA). The research result could also be published in relevant academic journals.

Please complete below:

I, _____ certify that this research has been explained to me and I understand what is going to be done, and why. I agree to be interviewed as a research participant in Oluwatobi Alabi's doctoral study.

PLEASE DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE SCOPE
AND NATURE OF THE STUDY

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Informed Consent Form for Audio Recording



Participant Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

Ethical Clearance Number: REC-01-00102-2018

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded through use of the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment (tape-recorder or cell phone)		

Please complete below:

I, _____ certify that this interview process can be recorded with the equipment ticked above. I understand the purpose of this process and I agree to freely participate in Mr Oluwatobi Alabi's doctoral study.

**PLEASE DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE SCOPE
AND NATURE OF THE STUDY**

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annexure C: Interview Schedule



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Topic: Women's Use of Traditional Aphrodisiacs in Ilorin, North Central Nigeria

Biographical information

1. Name
2. Recommended pseudonym name
3. Age
4. Gender
5. Occupation

Women using traditional aphrodisiacs

6. What information do you have about traditional aphrodisiacs and their effects?
7. When did you first hear about traditional aphrodisiacs?
8. Why do women generally use it, in your view?
9. Do you know of cases where women have used it – and have positive stories to tell?
10. When did you start using traditional aphrodisiacs, and why?
11. What types do you use?
12. Do you find them helpful? If yes, in what ways are they of help?
13. Whose sexual pleasure does these traditional aphrodisiacs increase (men's or women's)?
14. Do you use this traditional aphrodisiac for other reasons aside from stimulating sex?
15. How does the use of traditional aphrodisiacs make you feel as a woman?
16. How has the use of traditional aphrodisiacs affected your relationship?
17. Would you encourage other women to use it? Why?
18. Would you say that aphrodisiacs are commonly used in Ilorin? Does it result in improved marriages or relationships?
19. Do aphrodisiacs give women more 'power' in a relationship?
20. Do you know of, or do you use, other kinds of aphrodisiacs, apart from traditional ones?

Key informants (Men)

21. Do you have any information about aphrodisiacs? Both traditional and modern?
22. Who uses traditional aphrodisiacs? Men or women (or both)?
23. What do you think about women using traditional aphrodisiacs?
24. Would you encourage your wife/a woman you know to use traditional aphrodisiacs?
25. Why?
26. How do you think aphrodisiacs affect your relationship? In a positive or negative way?
27. Are there more benefits for men, women, or both?

Only for sellers of traditional aphrodisiacs

28. As a seller of this product, what do you think of traditional aphrodisiacs?
29. What are the popular types and how are they made?
30. Why do you think women use it?
31. How do they use it and is the usage continuous?
32. If the usage is continuous, what happens when you stop using it?
33. Who are your most frequent buyers (married, unmarried, young women)?
34. Can you describe the demand for products? Exactly how much do you produce and sell?
Are there 'peak times'?
35. In your view, how do women benefit from using it?

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